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The original owner (author?)  
is mentioned kindly by John Beckenford in his "Memory Held in Trust" - pp 47-48

C.B. Heberden was a Fellow &

Tutor in Classics of Brasenose

College, Oxford, in the 1880's; later he  
was ~~head~~ <sup>Principal</sup> of the College as Principal - died in 1922

He was a descendant of the  
famous Dr. Wm. Heberden, physician

to the Royal Family in the second half  
of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century

The correction in the text as C.B. Heberden  
He has given me it with a fine-tooth comb.

I came by this book with a batch of  
other Heberden family books  
in Exeter, England, in 1932.

There must be a second edition

I cannot ascertain the publication date  
Note that it was published not only  
in London but also in The Lake Country  
itself - at Windermere

H.W. Morrison  
12 South Drive  
Toronto

CP 1000



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HUGH MORRISON





# THE EXCURSION

A POEM

BY

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

WITH

TOPOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

*by Heberden?*

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LONDON : SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.  
WINDERMERE : J. GARNETT.



## PREFACE.

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The Title-page announces that this is only a portion of a poem ; and the Reader must be here apprised that it belongs to the second part of a long and laborious Work, which is to consist of three parts. — The Author will candidly acknowledge that, if the first of these had been completed, and in such a manner as to satisfy his own mind, he should have preferred the natural order of publication, and have given that to the world first ; but, as the second division of the Work was designed to refer more to passing events, and to an existing state of things, than the others were meant to do, more continuous exertion was naturally bestowed upon it, and greater progress made here than in the rest of the poem ; and as this part does not depend upon the preceding, to a degree which will materially injure its own peculiar interest, the Author, complying with the earnest entreaties of some valued Friends, presents the following pages to the Public.

It may be proper to state whence the poem, of which The Excursion is a part, derives its Title of *THE RECLUSE*. — Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. That Work, addressed to a dear Friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's Intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished ; and the result of the investigation, which gave rise to it, was a deter-

mination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society ; and to be entitled, the Recluse ; as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.—The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself ; and the two Works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the ante-chapel has to the body of a gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have been long before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader, to have such connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices.

The Author would not have deemed himself justified in saying, upon this occasion, so much of performances, either unfinished or unpublished, if he had not thought that the labour bestowed by him upon what he has heretofore and now laid before the Public, entitled him to candid attention for such a statement as he thinks necessary to throw light upon his endeavours to please and, he would hope, to benefit his countrymen.—Nothing further need be added, than that the first and third parts of *The Recluse* will consist chiefly of meditations in the Author's own person ; and, that in the intermediate part (*The Excursion*), the intervention of characters speaking is employed, and something of a dramatic form adopted.

It is not the Author's intention formally to announce a system : it was more animating to him to proceed in a different course ; and if he shall succeed in conveying to the mind clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings, the Reader will have no difficulty in extracting the system for himself. And in the meantime the following passage, taken from the conclusion of the first book of the *Recluse*, may be acceptable as a kind of *Prospectus* of the design and scope of the whole Poem.



"On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,  
 Musing in solitude, I oft perceive  
 Fair trains of imagery before me rise,  
 Accompanied by feelings of delight,  
 Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed ;  
 And I am conscious of affecting thoughts  
 And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes  
 Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh  
 The good and evil of our mortal state.  
 —To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,  
 Whether from breath of outward circumstance,  
 Or from the Soul — an impulse to herself —  
 I would give utterance in numerous verse,  
 Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope,  
 And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith ;  
 Of blessed consolations in distress ;  
 Of moral strength, and intellectual Power ;  
 Of joy in widest commonality spread ;  
 Of the individual Mind that keeps her own  
 Inviolatè retirement, subject there  
 To Conscience only, and the law supreme  
 Of that Intelligence which governs all —  
 I sing :— 'fit audience let me find though few !'"

"So prayed, more gaining than he asked, the Bard —  
 Holiest of men. Urania, I shall need  
 Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such  
 Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven !  
 For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink  
 Deep — and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds  
 To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.  
 All strength — all terror, single or in bands,  
 That ever was put forth in personal form —  
 Jehovah — with his thunder, and the choir  
 Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones —  
 I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not  
 The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,

Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out  
By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe  
As fall upon us often when we look  
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—  
My haunt, and the main region of my song.  
—Beauty—a living Presence of the earth,  
Surpassing the most fair ideal Forms  
Which craft of delicate Spirits hath composed  
From earth's materials—waits upon my steps ;  
Pitches her tents before me as I move,  
An hourly neighbour. Paradise, and groves  
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old  
Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be  
A history only of departed things,  
Or a mere fiction of what never was ?  
For the discerning intellect of Man,  
When wedded to this godly universe  
In love and holy passion, shall find these  
A simple produce of the common day.  
—I, long before the blissful hour arrives,  
Would chant, in lonely peace the spousal verse  
Of this great consummation :—and, by words  
Which speak of nothing more than what we are,  
Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep  
Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain  
To noble raptures ; while my voice proclaims  
How exquisitely the individual Mind  
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less  
Of the whole species) to the external World  
Is fitted :—and how exquisitely, too—  
Theme this but little heard of among men—  
The external World is fitted to the Mind ;  
And the creation (by no lower name  
Can it be called) which they with blended might  
Accomplish :—this is our high argument.  
—Such grateful haunts foregoing, if I oft  
Must turn elsewhere—to travel near the tribes

And fellowships of men, and see ill sights  
Of maddening passions mutually inflamed ;  
Must hear Humanity in fields and groves  
Pipe solitary anguish ; or must hang  
Brooding above the fierce confederate storm  
Of sorrow, barricadoed evermore  
Within the walls of cities—may these sounds  
Have their authentic comment ; that even these  
Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn !—  
Come prophetic Spirit ! that inspir'st  
The human Soul of universal earth,  
Dreaming on things to come ; and dost possess  
A metropolitan temple in the hearts  
Of mighty Poets : upon me bestow  
A gift of genuine insight ; that my Song  
With star-like virtue in its place may shine,  
Shedding benignant influence, and secure,  
Itself from all malevolent effect  
Of those mutations that extend their sway  
Throughout the nether sphere !—And if with this  
I mix more lowly matter ; with the thing  
Contemplated, describe the Mind and Man  
Contemplating ; and who, and what he was—  
The transitory Being that beheld  
This Vision ; when and where, and how he lived ;—  
Be not this labour useless. If such theme  
May sort with highest objects, then—dread Power !  
Whose gracious favour is the primal source  
Of all illumination—may my Life  
Express the image of a better time,  
More wise desires, and simpler manners ;—nurse  
My Heart in genuine freedom : all pure thoughts  
Be with me ;—so shall thy unfailing love  
Guide, and support, and cheer me to the end !”



## BOOK I.

---

### THE WANDERER.

A summer forenoon.—The Author reaches a ruined cottage upon a common, and there meets with a revered friend, the Wanderer, of whom he gives an account.—The Wanderer, while resting under the shade of the trees that surround the cottage, relates the history of its last inhabitant.

'Twas summer, and the sun had mounted high :  
Southward the landscape indistinctly glared  
Through a pale steam ; but all the northern downs,  
In clearest air ascending, showed far off  
A surface dappled o'er with shadows flung  
From many a brooding cloud ; far as the sight  
Could reach, those many shadows lay in spots  
Determined and unmoved, with steady beams  
Of bright and pleasant sunshine interposed ;  
Pleasant to him who on the soft cool moss  
Extends his careless limbs along the front  
Of some huge cave, whose rocky ceiling casts  
A twilight of its own, an ample shade,  
Where the wren warbles, while the dreaming man,  
Half conscious of the soothing melody,  
With side-long eye looks out upon the scene,  
By that impending covert made more soft,  
More low and distant ! Other lot was mine ;  
Yet with good hope that soon I should obtain  
As grateful resting-place, and livelier joy.  
Across a bare wide Common I was toiling  
With languid feet, which by the slippery ground  
Were baffled ; nor could my weak arm disperse  
The host of insects gathering round my face,  
And ever with me as I paced along.

Upon that open level stood a grove,  
The wish'd-for port to which my steps were bound.  
Thither I came, and there — amid the gloom  
Spread by a brotherhood of lofty elms; —  
Appeared a roofless hut; four naked walls  
That stared upon each other! — I look'd around,  
And to my wish and to my hope espied  
Him whom I sought; a man of reverend age,  
But stout and hale, for travel unimpaired.  
There was he seen upon the cottage bench,  
Recumbent in the shade, as if asleep;  
An iron-pointed staff lay at his side.

Him had I mark'd the day before — alone  
And in the middle of the public way  
Station'd, as if to rest himself, with face  
Turn'd towards the sun then setting, while that staff  
Afforded to his figure, as he stood,  
Detain'd for contemplation or repose,  
Graceful support; the countenance of the man  
Was hidden from my view, and he himself  
Unrecognized; but, stricken by the sight,  
With slacken'd footsteps I advanced, and soon  
A glad congratulation we exchanged  
At such unthought-of meeting. For the night  
We parted, nothing willingly; and now  
He by appointment waited for me here,  
Beneath the shelter of these clustering elms.

We were tried friends; I from my childhood up  
Had known him. In a little town obscure,\*

\* Hawkshead, a picturesque *little* town at the head of Esthwaite Water, is the place here alluded to; and many are the pilgrimages annually made to view with curious interest, if not with reverence, the humble school-house where Wordsworth received much of his early culture; and many a vain search has been made to discover the initials of the youthful poet upon the quaint black oak desk he used. These comfortless oak fixtures have



A market-village, seated in a track  
Of mountains, where my school-day time was pass'd,  
One room he own'd, the fifth part of a house,  
A place to which he drew, from time to time,  
And found a kind of home or harbour there.

He loved me ; from a swarm of rosy boys  
Singled out me, as he in sport would say,  
For my grave looks — too thoughtful for my years.  
As I grew up, it was my best delight  
To be his chosen comrade. Many a time,  
On holidays, we wander'd through the woods,  
A pair of random travellers we sate —  
We walk'd ; he pleas'd me with his sweet discourse  
Of things which he had seen ; and often touch'd  
Abstrusest matter, reasonings of the mind  
Turn'd inward ; or at my request he sang  
Old songs — the product of his native hills ;  
A skilful distribution of sweet sounds,  
Feeding the soul, and eagerly imbibed  
As cool refreshing water, by the care  
Of the industrious husbandman diffused

probably remained from the foundation of the school by Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York, in Queen Elizabeth's reign. Esthwaite Hall, on the western margin of the lake, now a mere farmhouse, was the Archbishop's birth-place ; his descendants hold estates of some extent in the vicinity. Wordsworth, in his school-days, lodged with a well-remembered ancient dame named Ann Tyson, and did not leave Hawkshead till his sixteenth year. At that period Hawkshead was a flourishing town ; the wool trade was considerable, its market was a bustling scene, and on stated hiring days it was a great rendezvous for servants and farmers. The school then numbered at least 100, and the residence in the town of so many youths of good connexions, added not a little to its prosperity. On examination days, the crowd of carriages and visitors presented an animated scene. All this is now much changed. The school, after a long period of neglect and depression, is, however, reviving under the able mastership of the Rev. H. Baines. A new school-room has been built, and many improvements carried out.

Through a parch'd meadow-ground in the time of  
drought.

Still deeper welcome found his pure discourse :  
How precious when in riper days I learn'd  
To weigh with care his words, and to rejoice  
In the plain presence of his dignity !

O many are the poets that are sown  
By nature ! men endow'd with highest gifts —  
The vision, and the faculty divine —  
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse  
(Which in the docile season of their youth  
It was denied them to acquire, through lack  
Of culture and the inspiring aid of books ;  
Or haply by a temper too severe ;  
Or a nice backwardness afraid of shame),  
Nor having e'er, as life advanced, been led  
By circumstances to take unto the height  
The measure of themselves, these favour'd beings,  
All but a scatter'd few, live out their time,  
Husbanding that which they possess within,  
And go to the grave unthought of. Strongest minds  
Are often those of whom the noisy world  
Hears least ; else surely this man had not left  
His graces unreveal'd and unproclaim'd.  
But, as the mind was fill'd with inward light,  
So not without distinction had he lived,  
Beloved and honour'd — far as he was known.  
And some small portion of his eloquent speech,  
And something that may serve to set in view  
The feeling pleasures of his loneliness,  
The doings, observations, which his mind  
Had dealt with — I will here record in verse ;  
Which, if with truth it correspond, and sink  
Or rise, as venerable Nature leads,  
The high and tender Muses shall accept  
With gracious smile, deliberately pleased,



And listening Time reward with sacred praise.

Among the hills of Athol he was born :  
There, on a small hereditary farm,  
An unproductive slip of rugged ground,  
His father dwelt ; and died in poverty ;  
While he, whose lowly fortune I retrace,  
The youngest of three sons, was yet a babe,  
A little one unconscious of their loss.  
But ere he had out-grown his infant days,  
His widow'd mother, for a second mate,  
Espoused the teacher of the village school ;  
Who on her offspring zealously bestow'd  
Needful instruction ; not alone in arts  
Which to his humble duties appertain'd,  
But in the lore of right and wrong, the rule  
Of human kindness, in the peaceful ways  
Of honesty, and holiness severe.  
A virtuous household, though exceeding poor !  
Pure livers were they all, austere and grave,  
And fearing God ; the very children taught  
Stern self-respect, a reverence for God's word,  
And an habitual piety, maintain'd  
With strictness scarcely known on English ground.

From his sixth year, the boy of whom I speak  
In summer tended cattle on the hills ;  
But, through the inclement and the perilous days  
Of long-continuing winter, he repair'd  
To his stepfather's school, that stood alone,  
Sole building on a mountain's dreary edge,  
Far from the sight of city, spire, or sound  
Of minster clock ! From that bleak tenement  
He, many an evening, to his distant home  
In solitude returning, saw the hills  
Grow larger in the darkness, all alone  
Beheld the stars come out above his head,  
And travell'd through the wood with no one near

To whom he might confess the things he saw.  
So the foundations of his mind were laid,  
In such communion, not from terror free,  
While yet a child, and long before his time,  
Had he perceived the presence and the power  
Of greatness ; and deep feelings had impress'd  
Great objects on his mind, with portraiture  
And colour so distinct, that on his mind  
They lay like substances, and almost seem'd  
To haunt the bodily sense. He had received  
(Vigorous in native genius as he was)  
A precious gift ; for, as he grew in years,  
With these impressions would he still compare  
All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms ;  
And, being still unsatisfied with aught  
Of dimmer character, he thence attain'd  
An active power to fasten images  
Upon his brain ; and on their pictured lines  
Intensely brooded, even till they acquired  
The liveliness of dreams. Nor did he fail,  
While yet a child, with a child's eagerness  
Incessantly to turn his ear and eye  
On all things which the moving seasons brought  
To feed such appetite : nor this alone  
Appeased his yearning — in the after-day  
Of boyhood, many an hour in caves forlorn.  
And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags  
He sate, and e'en in their fix'd lineaments,  
Or from the power of a peculiar eye,  
Or by creative feeling overborne,  
Or by predominance of thought oppress'd,  
E'en in their fix'd and steady lineaments  
He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,  
Expression ever varying !

Thus inform'd,  
He had small need of books ; for many a tale

Traditionary, round the mountains hung,  
And many a legend, peopling the dark woods,  
Nourish'd Imagination in her growth,  
And gave the Mind that apprehensive power  
By which she is made quick to recognize  
The moral properties and scope of things.  
But eagerly he read, and read again,  
Whate'er the minister's old shelf supplied ;  
The life and death of martyrs, who sustain'd,  
With will inflexible, those fearful pangs  
Triumphantly display'd in records left  
Of persecution, and the Covenant—times  
Whose echo rings through Scotland to this hour !  
And there, by lucky hap, had been preserved  
A straggling volume, torn and incomplete,  
That left half-told the preternatural tale,  
Romance of giants, chronicle of fiends,  
Profuse in garniture of wooden cuts  
Strange and uncouth ; dire faces, figures dire,  
Sharp-kneed, sharp-elbow'd, and lean-ankled too,  
With long and ghostly shanks—forms which once seen  
Could never be forgotten !

In his heart,  
Where Fear sate thus, a cherish'd visitant,  
Was wanting yet the pure delight of love  
By sound diffused, or by the breathing air,  
Or by the silent looks of happy things,  
Or flowing from the universal face  
Of earth and sky. But he had felt the power  
Of Nature, and already was prepared  
By his intense conceptions, to receive  
Deeply the lesson deep of love which he,  
Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught  
To feel intensely, cannot but receive.

From early childhood, even as hath been said,

From his sixth year he had been sent abroad  
In summer to tend herds : such was his task  
Thenceforward till the later day of youth.  
O then what soul was his, when, on the tops  
Of the high mountains, he beheld the sun  
Rise up and bathe the world in light ! He look'd —  
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth  
And ocean's liquid mass, beneath him lay  
In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touch'd,  
And in their silent faces did he read  
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,  
Nor any voice of joy ; his spirit drank  
The spectacle ; sensation, soul, and form,  
All melted into him ; they swallow'd up  
His animal being ; in them did he live,  
And by them did he live : they were his life.  
In such access of mind, in such high hour  
Of visitation from the living God,  
Thought was not ; in enjoyment it expired.  
No thanks he breathed, he proffer'd no request ;  
Rapt into still communion that transcends  
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,  
His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power  
That made him ; it was blessedness and love !

A Herdsman on the lonely mountain-tops,  
Such intercourse was his, and in this sort  
Was his existence oftentimes *possess'd*.  
Oh ! then how beautiful, how bright, appear'd  
The written Promise. He had early learn'd  
To reverence the Volume which displays  
The mystery — the life which cannot die :  
But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith ;  
There did he see the writing — all things there  
Breathed immortality, revolving life,  
And greatness still revolving infinite ;  
There littleness was not ; the least of things

Seem'd infinite ; and there his spirit shaped  
Her prospects, nor did he believe,— he *saw*.  
What wonder if his being thus became  
Sublime and comprehensive ? Low desires,  
Low thoughts had there no place ; yet was his heart  
Lowly ; for he was meek in gratitude,  
Oft as he call'd those ecstasies to mind,  
And whence they flow'd : and from them he acquired  
Wisdom, which works through patience ; thence he  
learn'd,  
In many a calmer hour of sober thought,  
To look on Nature with a humble heart,  
Self-question'd where it did not understand,  
And with a superstitious eye of love.

So pass'd the time ; yet to the nearest town  
He duly went with what small overplus  
His earnings might supply, and brought away  
The book which most had tempted his desires  
While at the stall he read. Among the hills  
He gazed upon that mighty orb of song,  
The divine Milton. Lore of different kind,  
The annual savings of a toilsome life,  
His stepfather supplied : books that explain  
The purer elements of truth involved  
In lines and numbers, and, by charm severe,  
(Especially perceived where nature droops  
And feeling is suppress'd,) preserve the mind  
Busy in solitude and poverty.  
These occupations oftentimes deceived  
The listless hours, while in the hollow vale,  
Hollow and green, he lay on the green turf  
In pensive idleness. What could he do  
With blind endeavours, in that lonesome life,  
Thus thirsting daily ? Yet still uppermost  
Nature was at his heart as if he felt —  
Though yet he knew not how — a wasting power.



In all things which from her sweet influence  
Might tend to wean him. Therefore with her hues,  
Her forms, and with the spirit of her forms,  
He clothed the nakedness of austere truth.  
While yet he linger'd in the rudiments  
Of science, and among her simplest laws,  
His triangles — they were the stars of heaven,  
The silent stars ! Oft did he take delight  
To measure th' altitude of some tall crag  
That is the eagle's birthplace, or some peak  
Familiar with forgotten years, that shows  
Inscribed, as with the silence of the thought,  
Upon its bleak and visionary sides,  
The history of many a winter storm, —  
Or obscure records of the path of fire.

And thus, before his eighteenth year was told,  
Accumulated feelings press'd his heart  
With an increasing weight ; he was o'erpower'd  
By Nature, by the turbulence subdued  
Of his own mind ; by mystery and hope,  
And the first virgin passion of a soul  
Communing with the glorious universe.  
Full often wish'd he that the winds might rage  
When they were silent ; far more fondly now  
Than in his earlier season did he love  
Tempestuous nights — the conflict and the sounds  
That live in darkness : — from his intellect  
And from the stillness of abstracted thought  
He ask'd repose ; and I have heard him say  
That often, failing at this time to gain  
The peace required, he scann'd the laws of light  
Amid the roar of torrents, where they send  
From hollow clefts up to the clearer air  
A cloud of mist, which in the sunshine frames  
A lasting tablet — for the observer's eye  
Varying its rainbow hues. But vainly thus,

And vainly by all other means, he strove  
To mitigate the fever of his heart.

In dreams, in study, and in ardent thought,  
Thus, even from childhood upward, was he rear'd :  
For intellectual progress wanting much,  
Doutless, of needful help — yet gaining more ;  
And every moral feeling of his soul  
Strengthen'd and braced, by breathing in content  
The keen, the wholesome air of poverty,  
And drinking from the well of homely life.  
But, from past liberty, and tried restraints,  
He now was summon'd to select the course  
Of humble industry that promised best  
To yield him so unworthy maintenance.  
The mother strove to make her son perceive  
With what advantage he might teach a school  
In the adjoining village ; but the youth,  
Who of this service made a short essay,  
Found that the wanderings of his thoughts were then  
A misery to him ; that he must resign  
A task he was unable to perform.

That stern yet kindly spirit who constrains  
The Savoyard to quit his native rocks,  
The free-born Swiss to leave his narrow vales  
(Spirit attach'd to regions mountainous  
Like their own steadfast clouds)— did now impel  
His restless mind to look abroad with hope.  
An irksome drudgery seems it to plod on,  
Through dusty ways, in storm, from door to door,  
A vagrant merchant bent beneath his load !  
Yet do such travellers find their own delight ;  
And their hard service, deem'd debasing now,  
Gain'd merited respect in simpler times,  
When squire, and priest, and they who round them dwelt  
In rustic sequestration, all dependent

Upon the Pedlar's\* toil — supplied their wants,  
Or pleased their fancies, with the wares he brought.  
Not ignorant was the youth that still no few  
Of his adventurous countrymen were led  
By perseverance in this track of life  
To competence and ease ; to him it bore  
Attractions manifold — and this he chose.  
He ask'd his mother's blessing ; and with tears  
Thanking his second father, ask'd from him  
Paternal blessings. The good pair bestow'd  
Their farewell benediction, but with hearts  
Foreboding evil. From his native hills  
He wander'd far : much did he see of men,  
Their manners, their enjoyments, and pursuits,  
Their passions, and their feelings ; chiefly those  
Essential and eternal in the heart,  
Which 'mid the simpler forms of rural life,  
Exist more simple in their elements,  
And speak a plainer language. In the woods,  
A lone enthusiast, and among the fields,  
Itinerant in this labour, he had pass'd  
The better portion of his time ; and there  
Spontaneously had his affections thriven  
Upon the bounties of the year, and felt  
The liberty of Nature ; there he kept  
In solitude and solitary thought  
His mind in a just equipoise of love.  
Serene it was, unclouded by the cares  
Of ordinary life ; unvex'd, unwarp'd

\* In conversation, Wordsworth is known to have frequently dwelt with pleasure on the wandering life of a Pedlar, and the opportunities it afforded for the study of human nature ; and in his writings he takes occasion to extol these wayfarers as a class, and to remark upon the high estimation in which they were formerly held. Dr. Davy informs us that a sister-in-law of Wordsworth's was brought up in the family of one who earned an independence by carrying a pack, and afterwards opened a shop



By partial bondage. In his steady course,  
No piteous revolutions had he felt,  
No wild varieties of joy and grief.  
Unoccupied by sorrow of its own,  
His heart lay open ; and, by Nature tuned  
And constant disposition of his thoughts  
To sympathy with man, he was alive  
To all that was enjoy'd where'er he went ;  
And all that was endured ; for in himself  
Happy, and quiet in his cheerfulness,  
He had no painful pressure from without  
That made him turn aside from wretchedness  
With coward fears. He could *afford* to suffer  
With those whom he saw suffer. Hence it came  
That in our best experience he was rich,  
And in the wisdom of our daily life.  
For hence, minutely, in his various rounds,  
He had observed the progress and decay  
Of many minds, of minds and bodies too ;  
The history of many families ;  
How they had prospered ; how they were o'erthrown  
By passion or mischance ; or such misrule  
Among the unthinking masters of the earth  
As makes the nations groan. This active course,  
Chosen in youth, through manhood he pursued,  
Till due provision for his modest wants  
Had been obtain'd ; and, thereupon, resolved  
To pass the remnant of his days untask'd  
With needless services, from hardship free.  
His calling laid aside, he lived at ease :  
But still he loved to pace the public roads  
And the wild paths ; and, when the summer's warmth

in Kendal. He appears to have been a man of superior character and endowments, and the incidents of his life were of sufficient interest to lay hold of the imagination of the poet. For an amusing parallel between the knight-errant and the Pedlar, see the third paragraph of BOOK VIII.

Invited him, would often leave his home  
And journey far, revisiting those scenes  
That to his memory were most endear'd.  
Vigorous in health, of hopeful spirits, untouch'd  
By worldly-mindedness or anxious care ;  
Observant, studious, thoughtful, and refresh'd  
By knowledge gathered up from day to day ;—  
Thus had he lived a long and innocent life.

The Scottish Church, both on himself and those  
With whom from childhood he grew up, had held  
The strong hand of her purity ; and still  
Had watch'd him with an unrelenting eye.  
This he remember'd in his riper age  
With gratitude, and reverential thoughts.  
But by the native vigour of his mind,  
By his habitual wanderings out of doors,  
By loneliness, and goodness, and kind works,  
Whate'er in docile childhood or in youth  
He had imbibed of fear or darker thought,  
Was melted all away : so true was this,  
That sometimes his religion seem'd to me  
Self-taught, as of a dreamer in the woods ;  
Who to the model of his own pure heart  
Framed his belief, as grace divine inspired,  
Or human reason dictated with awe.  
And surely never did there live on earth  
A man of kindlier nature. The rough sports  
And teasing ways of children vex'd not him ;  
Nor could he bid them from his presence, tired  
With questions and importunate demand.  
Indulgent listener was he to the tongue  
Of garrulous age ; nor did the sick man's tale,  
To his fraternal sympathy address'd,  
Obtain reluctant hearing.

Plain his garb,

Such as might suit a rustic sire prepared  
For Sabbath duties ; yet he was a man  
Whom no one could have pass'd without remark.  
Active and nervous was his gait ; his limbs  
And his whole figure breathed intelligence.  
Time had compress'd the freshness of his cheek  
Into a narrower circle of deep red ;  
But had not tamed his eye, that under brows  
Shaggy and grey, had meanings which it brought  
From years of youth ; which, like a being made  
Of many beings, he had wondrous skill  
To blend with knowledge of the years to come,  
Human, or such as lie beyond the grave.

So was he framed : and such his course of life,  
Who now, with no appendage but a staff,  
The prized memorial of relinquish'd toils,  
Upon that cottage-bench reposed his limbs,  
Screened from the sun. Supine the Wanderer lay,  
His eyes as if in drowsiness half shut,  
The shadows of the breezy elms above  
Dappling his face. He had not heard my steps  
As I approach'd, and near him did I stand  
Unnoticed in the shade some minutes' space.  
At length I hailed him, seeing that his hat  
Was moist with water-drops, as if the brim  
Had newly scoop'd a running stream. He rose,  
And ere the pleasant greeting that ensued  
Was ended, "'Tis," said I, "a burning day ;  
My lips are parch'd with thirst, but you, I guess,  
Have somewhere found relief." He, at the word,  
Pointing towards a sweet-brier, bade me climb  
The fence hard by, where that aspiring shrub  
Look'd out upon the road. It was a plot  
Of garden-ground run wild, its matted weeds  
Marked with the steps of those, whom, as they pass'd,  
The gooseberry-trees that shot in long lank slips,

Or currants hanging from their leafless stems  
In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap  
The broken wall. I look'd around, and there,  
Where two tall hedge-rows of thick alder boughs  
Join'd in a cold damp nook, espied a well  
Shrouded with willow-flowers and plummy fern.  
My thirst I slaked, and from the cheerless spot  
Withdrawing, straightway to the shade return'd  
Where sate the old man on the cottage bench ;  
And while, beside him, with uncover'd head,  
I yet was standing, freely to respire,  
And cool my temples in the fanning air,  
Thus did he speak : — “ I see around me here  
Things which you cannot see : we die, my friend ;  
Nor we alone, but that which each man loved  
And prized in his peculiar nook of earth  
Dies with him, or is changed ; and very soon  
Even of the good is no memorial left.  
The poets, in their elegies and songs  
Lamenting the departed, call the groves,  
They call upon the hills and streams to mourn.  
And senseless rocks ; nor idly—for they speak,  
In these their invocations, with a voice  
Obedient to the strong creative power  
Of human passion. Sympathies there are  
More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,  
That steal upon the meditative mind,  
And grow with thought. Beside yon spring I stood,  
And eyed its waters till we seem'd to feel  
One sadness, they and I. For them a bond  
Of brotherhood is broken : time has been  
When, every day, the touch of human hand  
Dislodged the natural sleep that binds them up  
In mortal stillness ; and they minister'd  
To human comfort. As I stoop'd to drink,  
Upon the slimy foot-stone I espied  
The useless fragment of a wooden bowl,

Green with the moss of years ; a pensive sight  
That moved my heart, recalling former days,  
When I could never pass that road but she  
Who lived within these walls, at my approach,  
A daughter's welcome gave me, and I loved her  
As my own child. Oh ! sir, the good die first,  
And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust  
Burn to the socket. Many a passenger  
Hath bless'd poor Margaret for her gentle looks,  
When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn  
From that forsaken spring ; and no one came  
But he was welcome ; no one went away  
But that it seem'd she loved him. She is dead,  
The light extinguish'd of her lonely hut,  
The hut itself abandon'd to decay,  
And she forgotten in the quiet grave !

“ I speak,” continued he, “ of one whose stock  
Of virtues bloom'd beneath this lowly roof.  
She was a woman of a steady mind,  
Tender and deep in her excess of love,  
Not speaking much, pleased rather with the joy  
Of her own thoughts : by some especial care  
Her temper had been framed, as if to make  
A being, who, by adding love to peace,  
Might live on earth a life of happiness.  
Her wedded partner lack'd not on his side,  
The humble worth that satisfied her heart ;  
Frugal, affectionate, sober, and withal  
Keenly industrious. She with pride would tell  
That he was often seated at his loom,  
In summer, ere the mower was abroad  
Among the dewy grass,—in early spring,  
Ere the last star had vanish'd. They who pass'd  
At evening, from behind the garden fence  
Might hear his busy spade, which he would ply,  
After his daily work, until the light



Had fail'd, and every leaf and flower were lost  
In the dark hedges. So their days were spent  
In peace and comfort ; and a pretty boy  
Was their best hope,—next to the God in heaven.

“Not twenty years ago, but you, I think,  
Can scarcely bear it now in mind, there came  
Two blighted seasons when the fields were left  
With half a harvest. It pleased heaven to add  
A worse affliction in the plague of war ;  
This happy land was stricken to the heart !  
A wanderer then among the cottages,  
I, with my freight of winter raiment, saw  
The hardships of that season ; many rich  
Sank down, as in a dream, among the poor ;  
And of the poor did many cease to be,  
And their place knew them not. Meanwhile abridged  
Of daily comforts, gladly reconciled  
To numerous self-denials, Margaret  
Went struggling on through those calamitous years  
With cheerful hope ; but ere the second autumn  
Her life's true help-mate on a sick-bed lay  
Smitten with perilous fever. In disease  
He linger'd long ; and when his strength return'd,  
He found the little he had stored, to meet  
The hour of accident or crippling age,  
Was all consumed. Two children had they now,  
One newly born. As I have said, it was  
A time of trouble : shoals of artisans  
Were from their daily labour turn'd adrift  
To seek their bread from public charity,  
They, and their wives and children—happier far  
Could they have lived as do the little birds  
That peck along the hedges, or the kite  
That makes his dwelling on the mountain rocks !

“A sad reverse it was for him who long

Had fill'd with plenty, and possess'd in peace,  
This lonely cottage. At his door he stood,  
And whistled many a snatch of merry tunes  
That had no mirth in them : or with his knife  
Carved uncouth figures on the heads of sticks ;  
Then, not less idly, sought, through every nook  
In house or garden, any casual work  
Of use or ornament ; and with a strange,  
Amusing, yet uneasy, novelty,  
He blended, where he might, the various tasks  
Of summer, autumn, winter, and of spring.  
But this endured not ; his good-humour soon  
Became a weight in which no pleasure was :  
And poverty brought on a pettish mood  
And a sore temper : day by day he droop'd,  
And he would leave his work, and to the town  
Without an errand, would direct his steps ;  
Or wander here and there among the fields.  
One while he would speak lightly of his babes,  
And with a cruel tongue ; at other times  
He toss'd them with a false unnatural joy :  
And 'twas a rueful thing to see the looks  
Of the poor innocent children. 'Every smile,'  
Said Margaret to me here beneath these trees,  
'Made my heart bleed.'"

At this the Wanderer paused ;  
And, looking up to those enormous elms,  
He said, "'Tis now the hour of deepest noon.  
At this still season of repose and peace,  
This hour, when all things which are not at rest  
Are cheerful ; while this multitude of flies  
Is filling all the air with melody ;  
Why should a tear be in an old man's eye ?  
Why should we thus, with an untoward mind,  
And in the weakness of humanity,  
From natural wisdom turn our hearts away ;

To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears,  
And feeding on disquiet, thus disturb  
The calm of nature with our restless thoughts ? ”

He spake with somewhat of a solemn tone :  
But, when he ended, there was in his face  
Such easy cheerfulness, a look so mild,  
That for a little time it stole away  
All recollection ; and that simple tale  
Pass'd from my mind like a forgotten sound.  
A while on trivial things we held discourse,  
To me soon tasteless. In my own despite,  
I thought of that poor woman as of one  
Whom I had known and loved. He had rehearsed  
Her homely tale with such familiar power,  
With such an active countenance, an eye  
So busy, that the things of which he spake  
Seem'd present ; and, attention now relax'd,  
There was a heart-felt chillness in my veins.  
I rose ; and, turning from the breezy shade,  
Went forth into the open air, and stood  
To drink the comfort of the warmer sun.  
Long time I had not stay'd, ere, looking round  
Upon that tranquil ruin, I return'd,  
And begg'd of the old man that, for my sake,  
He would resume his story.

He replied,  
“ It were a wantonness, and would demand  
Severe reproof, if we were men whose hearts  
Could hold vain dalliance with the misery  
Even of the dead ; contented thence to draw  
A momentary pleasure, never mark'd  
By reason, barren of all future good.  
But we have known that there is often found  
In mournful thoughts, and always might be found,  
A power to virtue friendly : were't not so, ”



I am a dreamer among men, indeed  
An idle dreamer ! 'Tis a common tale,  
An ordinary sorrow of man's life,  
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed  
In bodily form.—But, without further bidding,  
I will proceed.

“ While thus it fared with them,  
To whom this cottage, till those hapless years,  
Had been a blessed home, it was my chance  
To travel in a country far remote ;  
And glad I was, when, halting by yon gate  
That leads from the green lane, once more I saw  
These lofty elm-trees. Long I did not rest :  
With many pleasant thoughts I cheer'd my way  
O'er the flat common. Having reach'd the door,  
I knock'd ; and when I entered with the hope  
Of usual greeting, Margaret look'd at me  
A little while ; then turn'd her head away  
Speechless ; and, sitting down upon a chair,  
Wept bitterly. I wist not what to do,  
Or how to speak to her. Poor wretch ! at last  
She rose from off her seat, and then,—O sir !  
I cannot *tell* how she pronounced my name.  
With fervent love, and with a face of grief  
Unutterably helpless, and a look  
That seem'd to cling upon me, she inquired  
If I had seen her husband. As she spake,  
A strange surprise and fear came to my heart,  
Nor had I power to answer ere she told  
That he had disappear'd—not two months gone,  
He left his house ; two wretched days had pass'd,  
And on the third, as wistfully she raised  
Her head from off her pillow, to look forth,  
Like one in trouble, for returning light,  
Within her chamber casement she espied  
A folded paper, lying as if placed

To meet her waking eyes. This tremblingly  
She open'd—found no writing, but therein  
Pieces of money carefully inclosed,  
Silver and gold—‘I shudder’d at the sight,  
Said Margaret, ‘for I knew it was his hand  
Which placed it there ; and, ere that day was ended,  
That long and anxious day ! I learn’d from one  
Sent hither by my husband to impart  
The heavy news, that he had join’d a troop  
Of soldiers, going to a distant land.  
—He left me thus—he could not gather heart  
To take a farewell of me ; for he fear’d  
That I should follow with my babes, and sink  
Beneath the misery of that wandering life.’

“This tale did Margaret tell with many tears ;  
And, when she ended, I had little power  
To give her comfort, and was glad to take  
Such words of hope from her own mouth as served  
To cheer us both ; but long we had not talk’d,  
Ere we built up a pile of better thoughts,  
And with a brighter eye she look’d around  
As if she had been shedding tears of joy.  
We parted. ’Twas the time of early spring ;  
I left her busy with her garden tools ;  
And well remember, o’er that fence she look’d,  
And, while I paced along the footway-path,  
Call’d out, and sent a blessing after me,  
With tender cheerfulness ; and with a voice  
That seem’d the very sound of happy thoughts.

“I roved o’er many a hill and many a dale,  
With my accustom’d load ; in heat and cold,  
Through many a wood, and many an open ground ;  
In sunshine and in shade, in wet or fair,  
Drooping or blithe of heart, as might befall ;  
My best companions now the driving winds,

And now the 'trotting brooks' and whispering trees,  
And now the music of my own sad steps,  
With many short-lived thought that pass'd between,  
And disappear'd. I journeyed back this way  
Towards the wane of summer; when the wheat  
Was yellow; and the soft and bladed grass,  
Springing afresh, had o'er the hayfield spread  
Its tender verdure. At the door arrived,  
I found that she was absent. In the shade,  
Where now we sit, I waited her return.  
Her cottage, then a cheerful object, wore  
Its customary look,—only, I thought,  
The honeysuckle, crowding round the porch,  
Hung down in heavier tufts; and that bright weed,  
The yellow stone-crop, suffer'd to take root  
Along the window's edge, profusely grew,  
Blinding the lower panes. I turn'd aside,  
And stroll'd into her garden. It appear'd  
To lag behind the season, and had lost  
Its pride of neatness. From the border lines,  
Composed of daisy and resplendent thrift,  
Flowers straggling forth had on those paths encroach'd,  
Which they were used to deck: carnations, once  
Prized for surpassing beauty, and no less  
For the peculiar pains they had required,  
Declined their languid heads without support.  
The cumbrous bind-weed, with its wreaths and bells,  
Had twined about her two small rows of peas,  
And dragg'd them to the earth. Ere this an hour  
Was wasted. Back I turn'd my restless steps,  
A stranger pass'd; and, guessing whom I sought,  
He said that she was used to ramble far.  
The sun was sinking in the west; and now  
I sate with sad impatience. From within  
Her solitary infant cried aloud,  
Then, like a blast that dies away self-still'd,  
The voice was silent. From the bench I rose;

But neither could divert nor soothe my thoughts.  
The spot, though fair, was very desolate—  
The longer I remain'd, more desolate.  
And, looking round, I saw the corner stones,  
Till then unnoticed, on either side the door  
With dull red stains discolour'd, and stuck o'er  
With tufts and hairs of wool, as if the sheep,  
That fed upon the common, thither came  
Familiarly ; and found a couching-place  
Even at her threshold. Deeper shadows fell  
From these tall elms ; the cottage-clock struck eight ;  
I turn'd, and saw her distant a few steps.  
Her face was pale and thin, her figure too  
Was changed. As she unlock'd the door, she said,  
' It grieves me you have waited here so long,  
But, in good truth, I've wander'd much of late,  
And, sometimes—to my shame I speak—have need  
Of my best prayers to bring me back again.'  
While on the board she spread our evening meal,  
She told me—interrupting not the work  
Which gave employment to her listless hands—  
That she had parted with her elder child,  
To a kind master on a distant farm  
Now happily apprenticed—' I perceive  
You look at me, and you have cause ; to-day  
I have been travelling far ; and many days  
About the fields I wander, knowing this  
Only, that what I seek I cannot find ;  
And so I waste my time : for I am changed ;  
And to myself,' said she, ' have done much wrong  
And to this helpless infant. I have slept  
Weeping, and weeping have I waked ; my tears  
Have flow'd as if my body were not such  
As others are ; and I could never die.  
But I am now in mind and in my heart  
More easy ; and I hope,' said she, ' that Heaven  
Will give me patience to endure the things

Which I behold at home.' It would have grieved  
Your very soul to see her ; Sir, I feel  
The story linger in my heart : I fear  
'Tis long and tedious ; but my spirit clings  
To that poor woman : so familiarly  
Do I perceive her manner, and her look,  
And presence ; and so deeply do I feel  
Her goodness, that, not seldom, in my walks  
A momentary trance comes over me ;  
And to myself I seem to muse on one  
By sorrow laid asleep, or borne away ;  
A human being destined to awake  
To human life, or something very near  
To human life, when he shall come again  
For whom she suffer'd. Yes, it would have grieved  
Your very soul to see her : evermore  
Her eyelids droop'd, her eyes were downward cast ;  
And, when she at her table gave me food,  
She did not look at me. Her voice was low,  
Her body was subdued. In every act  
Pertaining to her house affairs, appear'd  
The careless stillness of a thinking mind  
Self-occupied ; to which all outward things  
Are like an idle matter. Still she sigh'd,  
But yet no motion of the breast was seen,  
No heaving of the heart. While by the fire  
We sate together, sighs came on my ear,  
I knew not how, and hardly whence they came.

" Ere my departure to her care I gave,  
For her son's use, some tokens of regard,  
Which with a look of welcome she received ;  
And I exhorted her to have her trust  
In God's good love, and seek his help by prayer.  
I took my staff, and when I kiss'd her babe,  
The tears stood in her eyes. I left her then  
With the best hope and comfort I could give.



She thank'd me for my wish ; but for my hope  
It seem'd she did not thank me.

“ I returned,  
And took my rounds along this road again  
Ere on its sunny bank the primrose flower  
Peep'd forth, to give an earnest of the spring.  
I found her sad and drooping ; she had learn'd  
No tidings of her husband ; if he lived,  
She knew not that he lived ; if he were dead,  
She knew not he was dead. She seem'd the same  
In person and appearance ; but her house  
Bespake a sleepy hand of negligence.  
The floor was neither dry nor neat, the hearth  
Was comfortless, and her small lot of books,  
Which in the cottage window, heretofore  
Had been piled up against the corner panes  
In seemly order, now, with straggling leaves  
Lay scatter'd here and there, open or shut  
As they had chanced to fall. Her infant babe  
Had from its mother caught the trick of grief,  
And sigh'd among its playthings. Once again  
I turn'd towards the garden gate, and saw,  
More plainly still, that poverty and grief  
Were now come nearer to her : weeds defaced  
The harden'd soil, and knots of wither'd grass ;  
No ridges there appear'd of clear black mould,  
No winter greenness ; of her herbs and flowers.  
It seem'd the better part were gnaw'd away  
Or trampled into earth ; a chain of straw,  
Which had been twined about the slender stem  
Of a young apple-tree, lay at its root ;  
The bark was nibbled round by truant sheep.  
—Margaret stood near, her infant in her arms,  
And, noting that my eye was on the tree,  
She said, ‘ I fear it will be dead and gone  
Ere Robert come again.’ Towards the house  
Together we return'd, and she inquired

If I had any hope :—but for her babe,  
And for her little orphan boy, she said,  
She had no wish to live—that she must die  
Of sorrow. Yet I saw the idle loom  
Still in its place ; his Sunday garments hung  
Upon the self-same nail ; his very staff  
Stood undisturb'd behind the door. And when,  
In bleak December, I retraced this way,  
She told me that her little babe was dead,  
And she was left alone. She now, released  
From her maternal cares, had taken up  
The employment common through these wilds, and  
By spinning hemp a pittance for herself ; [gain'd  
And for this end had hired a neighbour's boy  
To give her needful help. That very time  
Most willingly she put her work aside,  
And walk'd with me along the miry road  
Heedless how far ; and, in such piteous sort  
That any heart had ached to hear her, begg'd  
That, wheresoe'er I went, I still would ask  
For him whom she had lost. We parted then—  
Our final parting ; for from that time forth  
Did many seasons pass ere I return'd  
Into this tract again.

“ Nine tedious years

From their first separation, nine long years,  
She linger'd in unquiet widowhood ;  
A wife and widow. Needs must it have been  
A sore heart-wasting ! I have heard, my friend,  
That in yon arbour oftentimes she sate  
Alone, through half the vacant Sabbath day,  
And if a dog pass'd by, she still would quit  
The shade, and look abroad. On this old bench  
For hours she sate ; and evermore her eye  
Was busy in the distance, shaping things  
That made her heart beat quick. You see that path,  
Now faint,—the grass has crept o'er its grey line ;



There, to and fro, she paced through many a day  
Of the warm summer, from a belt of hemp  
That girt her waist, spinning the long drawn thread  
With backward steps. Yet ever as there pass'd  
A man whose garments show'd the soldier's red,  
Or crippled mendicant in sailor's garb,  
The little child who sate to turn the wheel  
Ceased from his task ; and she with falt'ring voice  
Made many a fond inquiry ; and when they,  
Whose presence gave no comfort, were gone by,  
Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate,  
That bars the traveller's road, she often stood,  
And when a stranger horseman came, the latch  
Would lift, and in his face look wistfully ;  
Most happy, if, from aught discover'd there  
Of tender feeling, she might dare repeat  
The same sad question. Meanwhile her poor hut  
Sank to decay : for he was gone whose hand,  
At the first nipping of October frost,  
Closed up each chink, and with fresh bands of straw  
Chequer'd the green-grown thatch. And so she lived  
Through the long winter, reckless and alone ;  
Until her house by frost, and thaw, and rain,  
Was sapp'd ; and while she slept, the nightly damps  
Did chill her breast ; and in the stormy day  
Her tatter'd clothes were ruffled by the wind ;  
Even at the side of her own fire. Yet still  
She loved this wretched spot, nor would for worlds  
Have parted hence : and still that length of road,  
And this rude bench, one torturing hope endear'd,  
Fast rooted at her heart : and here, my friend,—  
In sickness she remain'd ; and here she died,  
Last human tenant of these ruin'd walls !”

The old man ceased : he saw that I was moved ;  
From that low bench, rising instinctively,  
I turn'd aside in weakness, nor had power

To thank him for the tale which he had told.  
I stood, and leaning o'er the garden wall,  
Review'd that woman's sufferings ; and it seem'd  
To comfort me, while, with a brother's love,  
I bless'd her in the impotence of grief.  
At length towards the cottage I return'd  
Fondly,—and traced, with interest more mild,  
That secret spirit of humanity  
Which, 'mid the calm oblivious tendencies  
Of Nature, 'mid her plants, and weeds, and flowers,  
And silent overgrowings, still survived.  
The old man, noting this, resum'd, and said,  
“ My friend, enough to sorrow you have given,  
The purposes of wisdom ask no more :  
Be wise and cheerful ; and no longer read  
The forms of things with an unworthy eye.  
She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.  
I well remember that those very plumes,  
Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,  
By mist and silent raindrops silver'd o'er,  
As once I pass'd, did to my heart convey  
So still an image of tranquillity,  
So calm and still, and look'd so beautiful  
Amid the uneasy thoughts which fill'd my mind,  
That what we feel of sorrow and despair  
From ruin and from change, and all the grief  
That passing shows of being leave behind,  
Appear'd an idle dream, that could not live  
Where meditation was. I turn'd away,  
And walk'd along my road in happiness.”

He ceased. Ere long the sun declining shot  
A slant and mellow radiance, which began  
To fall upon us, while beneath the trees,  
We sate on that low bench : and now we felt,  
Admonish'd thus, the sweet hour coming on.  
A linnet warbled from those lofty elms,

A thrush sang loud, and other melodies,  
 At distance heard, peopled the milder air.  
 The old man rose, and, with a sprightly mein  
 Of hopeful preparation, grasp'd his staff;  
 Together casting then a farewell look  
 Upon those silent walls, we left the shade;  
 And, ere the stars were visible, had reach'd  
 A village inn,—our evening resting-place.

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## BOOK II.

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### THE SOLITARY.

The Author describes his travels with the Wanderer, whose character is further illustrated—Morning scene, and view of a Village Wake—Wanderer's account of a friend whom he purposes to visit—View, from an eminence, of the valley which his friend had chosen for his retreat—Sound of singing from below—a funeral procession—Descent into the valley—Observations drawn from the Wanderer at sight of a book accidentally discovered in a recess in the valley—Meeting with the Wanderer's friend, the Solitary—Wanderer's description of the mode of burial in this mountainous district—Solitary contrasts with this, that of the individual carried a few minutes before from the cottage—The cottage entered—Description of the Solitary's apartment—Repast there—View from the window, of two mountain summits—and the Solitary's description of the companionship they afford him—Account of the departed inmate of the cottage—Description of a grand spectacle upon the mountains, with its effect upon the Solitary's mind—Quit the house.

In days of yore how fortunately fared  
 The minstrel ! wandering on from hall to hall,  
 Baronial court or royal ; cheer'd with gifts  
 Munificent, and love, and ladies' praise ;

Now meeting on his road an armèd knight,  
Now resting with a pilgrim by the side  
Of a clear brook ; beneath an abbey's roof  
One evening sumptuously lodged ; the next  
Humbly in a religious hospital ;  
Or with some merry outlaws of the wood ;  
Or haply shrouded in a hermit's cell.  
Him, sleeping or awake, the robber spared ;  
He walk'd protected from the sword of war,  
By virtue of that sacred instrument,  
His harp, suspended at the traveller's side :  
His dear companion wheresoe'er he went,  
Opening from land to land an easy way  
By melody, and by the charm of verse.  
Yet not the noblest of that honour'd race  
Drew happier, loftier, more impassion'd thoughts  
From his long journeyings and eventful life,  
Than this obscure itinerant (an obscure  
But a high-soul'd and tender-hearted man)  
Had skill to draw from many a ramble, far  
And wide protracted through the tamer ground  
Of these our unimagined days ;  
Both while he trod the earth in humblest guise  
Accoutered with his burden and his staff ;  
And now, when free to move with lighter pace.

What wonder, then, if I, whose favorite school  
Hath been the fields, the roads, and rural lanes,  
Look'd on this guide with reverential love !  
Each with the other pleased, we now pursued  
Our journey—beneath favourable skies.  
Turn wheresoe'er we would, he was a light  
Unfailing : not a hamlet could we pass,  
Rarely a house, which did not yield to him  
Remembrances ; or from his tongue call forth  
Some way-beguiling tale. Nor less regard  
Accompanied those strains of apt discourse,

Which Nature's various objects might supply;  
And in the silence of his face I read  
His overflowing spirit. Birds and beasts,  
And the mute fish that glances in the stream,  
And harmless reptile coiling in the sun,  
And gorgeous insect hovering in the air,  
The fowl domestic, and the household dog—  
In his capacious mind he loved them all :  
Their rights acknowledging, he felt for all.  
Oft was occasion given me to perceive  
How the calm pleasures of the pasturing herd  
To happy contemplation soothed his walk  
Along the field, and in the shady grove ;  
How the poor brute's condition, forced to run  
Its course of suffering in the public road,  
Sad contrast ! all too often smote his heart  
With unavailing pity. Rich in love  
And sweet humanity, he was, himself,  
To the degree that he desired, beloved.  
Greetings and smiles we met with all day long,  
From faces that we knew ; we took our seats  
By many a cottage-hearth, where he received  
The welcome of an inmate from afar.  
Nor was he loth to enter ragged huts,  
Wherein his charity was bless'd ; his voice  
Heard as the voice of an experienced friend.  
And, sometimes—where the poor man held dispute  
With his own mind, unable to subdue  
Impatience, through inaptness to perceive  
General distress in his particular lot :  
Or cherishing resentment, or in vain  
Struggling against it, with a soul perplex'd,  
And finding in itself no steady power  
To draw the line of comfort that divides  
Calamity, the chastisement of Heaven,  
From the injustice of our brother men—  
To him appeal was made as to a judge ;



Who, with an understanding heart, allay'd  
The perturbation ; listen'd to the plea ;  
Resolved the dubious point ; and sentence gave,  
So grounded, so applied, that it was heard  
With soften'd spirit—even when it condemn'd.

Such intercourse I witness'd while we roved  
Now as his choice directed, now as mine ;  
Or both, with equal readiness of will ;  
Our course submitting to the changeful breeze  
Of accident. But when the rising sun  
Had three times call'd us to renew our walk,  
My fellow-traveller said, with earnest voice,  
As if the thought were but a moment old,  
That I must yield myself without reserve  
To his disposal. Glad was I of this.  
We started,—and he led me towards the hills ;  
Up through an ample vale, with higher hills  
Before us, mountains stern and desolate ;  
But in the majesty of distance now  
Set off, and to our ken appearing fair  
Of aspect, with aerial softness clad,  
And beautified with morning's purple beams.

The wealthy, the luxurious, by the stress  
Of business roused, or pleasure, ere their time,  
May roll in chariots, or provoke the hoofs  
Of the fleet coursers they bestride, to raise  
From earth the dust of morning, slow to rise ;  
And they, if blest with health and hearts at ease,  
Shall lack not their enjoyment : but how faint  
Compared with ours, who, pacing side by side,  
Could, with an eye of leisure, look on all  
That we beheld ; and lend the listening sense  
To every grateful sound of earth and air—  
Pausing at will ; our spirits braced, our thoughts  
Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,

And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves.

Mount slowly, sun ! and may our journey lie  
Awhile within the shadow of this hill,  
This friendly hill, a shelter from thy beams !  
Such is the summer pilgrim's frequent wish :  
And as that wish, with prevalence of thanks  
For present good o'er fear of future ill,  
Stole in among the morning's blither thoughts,  
'Twas chased away, for tow'rd the western side  
Of the broad vale casting a casual glance,  
We saw a throng of people—wherefore met ?  
Blithe notes of music, suddenly let loose  
On the thrill'd ear, did to the question yield  
Prompt answer ; they proclaim the annual wake,  
Which the bright season favours. Tabor and pipe  
In purpose join to hasten and reprove  
The laggard rustic ; and repay with boons  
Of merriment a particolour'd knot,  
Already form'd upon the village green.  
Beyond the limits of the shadow cast  
By the broad hill, glisten'd upon our sight  
That gay assemblage. Round them and above,  
Glitter, with dark recesses interposed,  
Casement, and cottage roof, and stems of trees  
Half-veil'd in vapoury cloud, silver steam  
Of dews fast melting on their leafy boughs  
By the strong sunbeams smitten. Like a mast  
Of gold, the maypole shines ; as if the rays  
Of morning, aided by exhaling dew,  
With gladsome influence could reanimate  
The faded garlands dangling from its sides.

Said I, " The music and the sprightly scene  
Invite us ; shall we quit our road, and join  
These festive matins ? " He replied, " Not loth  
Here would I linger, and with you partake,



Not one hour merely, but till evening's close,  
 The simple pastimes of the day and place.  
 By the fleet racers, ere the sun be set,  
 The turf of yon large pasture will be skimm'd ;  
 There, too, the lusty wrestlers will contend ;  
 But know we not that he who intermits  
 Th' appointed task and duties of the day,  
 Untunes full oft the pleasures of the day,  
 Checking the finer spirits that refuse  
 To flow when purposes are lightly changed ?  
 We must proceed, a length of journey yet  
 Remains untraced." Then, pointing with his staff  
 Towards those craggy summits, his intent  
 He thus imparted :—

" In a spot that lies  
 Among yon mountain fastnesses conceal'd,  
 You will receive, before the hour of noon,  
 Good recompense, I hope, for this day's toil—  
 From sight of one who lives secluded there.  
 Lonesome and lost : of whom, and whose past life  
 (Not to forestall such knowledge as may be  
 More faithfully collected from himself),  
 This brief communication shall suffice.

" Though now sojourning there, he, like myself,  
 Sprang from a stock of lowly parentage  
 Among the wilds of Scotland ; in a tract  
 Where many a shelter'd and well-tended plant,  
 Upon the humblest ground of social life,  
 Doth at this day, I trust, the blossoms bear  
 Of piety and simple innocence.  
 Such grateful promises his youth display'd ;  
 And, he show'd in study forward zeal,  
 All helps were sought, all measures strain'd, that he  
 By due scholastic discipline prepared,  
 Might to the ministry be call'd ; which done,  
 Partly through lack of better hopes—and part,

Perhaps, incited by a curious mind  
In early life he undertook the charge  
Of chaplain to a military troop  
Cheer'd by the Highland bagpipe, as they march'd  
In plaided vest—his fellow-countrymen.  
This office filling, and by native power,  
And force of native inclination, made  
An intellectual ruler in the haunts  
Of social vanity, he walk'd the world,  
Gay, and affecting graceful gaiety ;  
Lax, buoyant—less a pastor with his flock  
Than a soldier among soldiers—lived and roam'd  
Where fortune led : and Fortune, who oft proves  
The careless wanderer's friend, to him made known  
A blooming lady—a conspicuous flower,  
Admired for beauty, for her sweetness praised,  
Whom he had sensibility to love,  
Ambition to attempt, and skill to win.

“ For this fair bride, most rich in gifts of mind,  
Nor sparingly endow'd with worldly wealth,  
His office he relinquish'd ; and retired  
From the world's notice to a rural home.  
Youth's season yet with him was scarcely past,  
And she was in youth's prime. How full their joy —  
How free their love !—nor did their love decay,  
Nor joy abate, till,—pitiable doom !  
In the short course of one undreaded year  
Death blasted all. Death suddenly o'erthrew  
Two lovely children—all that they possess'd !  
The mother follow'd : miserably bare  
The one survivor stood ; he wept, he pray'd  
For his dismissal, day and night—compell'd  
By pain to turn his thoughts towards the grave,  
And face the regions of eternity.  
An uncomplaining apathy displaced  
This anguish ; and, indifferent to delight,

To aim and purpose, he consumed his days,  
To private interest dead, and public care.  
So lived he ; so he might have died.

“ But now,  
To the wide world’s astonishment, appear’d  
The glorious opening, the unlook’d-for dawn,  
That promised everlasting joy to France !  
That sudden light had power to pierce the gloom  
In which his spirit, friendless upon earth,  
In separation dwelt, and solitude.  
The voice of social transport reach’d even him !  
He broke from his contracted bounds, repair’d  
To the great city, an emporium then  
Of golden expectations, and receiving  
Freights, every day, from a new world of hope.  
Thither his popular talents he transferr’d !  
And, from the pulpit, zealously maintain’d  
The cause of Christ and civil liberty,  
As one, and moving to one glorious end.  
Intoxicating service ! I might say  
A happy service ; for he was sincere  
As vanity and fondness for applause,  
And new and shapeless wishes, would allow.

“ That righteous cause of freedom did, we know,  
Combine for one hostility, as friends,  
Ethereal natures and the worst of slaves :  
Was served by rival advocates that came  
From regions opposite as heaven and hell.  
One courage seem’d to animate them all :  
And from the dazzling conquests daily gain’d  
By their united efforts, there arose  
A proud and most presumptuous confidence  
In the transcendent wisdom of the age,  
And its discernment ; not alone in rights,  
And in the origin and bounds of power  
Social and temporal : but in laws divine,

Deduced by reason, or to faith reveal'd.  
An overweening trust was raised ; and fear  
Cast out, alike of person and of thing.  
Plague from this union spread, whose subtle bane  
The strongest did not easily escape ;  
And he, what wonder ? took a mortal taint.  
How shall I trace the change, how bear to tell  
That he broke faith with them whom he had laid  
In earth's dark chambers with a Christian's hope !  
An infidel contempt of holy writ  
Stole by degrees upon his mind ; and hence  
Life, like that Roman Janus, double-faced ;  
Vilest hypocrisy, the laughing, gay  
Hypocrisy, not leagued with fear, but pride.  
Smooth words he had to wheedle simple souls ;  
But, for disciples of the inner school,  
Old freedom was old servitude, and they  
The wisest whose opinions stoop'd the least  
To know restraints, and who most boldly drew  
Hopeful prognostications from a creed,  
Which, in the light of false philosophy,  
Spread like a halo round a misty moon,  
Widening its circle as the storms advance.

“ His sacred function was at length renounced  
And every day and every place enjoy'd  
The unshackled layman's natural liberty ;  
Speech, manners, morals, and all without disguise,  
I do not wish to wrong him ; though the course  
Of private life licentiously display'd  
Unhallow'd actions—planted like a crown  
Upon the insolent aspiring brow  
Of spurious notions—worn as open signs  
Of prejudice subdued—he still retain'd,  
'Mid much abasement, what he had received  
From nature—an intense and glowing mind.  
Wherefore, when humbled Liberty grew weak

And mortal sickness on her face appear'd,  
He colour'd objects to his own desire  
As with a lover's passion. Yet his moods  
Of pain were keen as those of better men,  
Nay, keener, as his fortitude was less :  
And he continued, when worse days were come,  
To deal about his sparkling eloquence,  
Struggling against the strange reverse with zeal  
That shew'd like happiness; but, in despite  
Of all this outside bravery, within  
He neither felt encouragement nor hope :  
For moral dignity and strength of mind  
Were wanting, and simplicity of life,  
And reverence for himself; and, last and best,  
Confiding thoughts, through love and fear of Him,  
Before whose sight the troubles of this world  
Are vain as billows in a tossing sea.

“The glory of the times fading away —  
The splendour, which had given a festal air  
To self-importance, hallow'd it, and veil'd  
From his own sight, this gone, therewith he lost  
All joy in human nature; was consumed,  
And vex'd, and chafed, by levity and scorn,  
And fruitless indignation; gall'd by pride;  
Made desperate by contempt of men who throve  
Before his sight in power or fame, and won,  
Without desert, what he desired; weak men,  
Too weak even for his envy or his hate!  
And thus beset, and finding in himself  
Nor pleasure nor tranquility, at last,  
After a wandering course of discontent  
In foreign lands, and inwardly oppress'd  
With malady — in part, I fear, provoked  
By weariness of life — he fix'd his home,  
Or, rather say, sate down by very chance,  
Among these rugged hills; where now he dwells,



And wastes the sad remainder of his hours  
In self-indulgent spleen, that doth not want  
Its own voluptuousness — on this resolved,  
With this content — that he will live and die  
Forgotten, — at safe distance from ‘a world  
Not moving to his mind.’”

These serious words

Closed the preparatory notices  
With which my fellow-traveller had beguiled  
The way, while we advanced up that wide vale.  
Now, suddenly diverging, he began  
To climb, upon its western side, a ridge,  
Pathless and smooth, a long and steep ascent ;  
As if the object of his quest had been  
Some secret of the mountains, cavern, fall  
Of water, or some boastful eminence  
Renown'd for splendid prospect far and wide.  
We clomb without a tract to guide our steps,  
And, on the summit, reach'd a healthy plain,  
With a tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops  
Before us ; savage region ! and I walk'd  
In weariness ; when, all at once, behold !  
Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,  
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high  
Among the mountains ; even as if the spot  
Had been, from eldest time, by wish of theirs  
So placed, — to be shut out from all the world !  
Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn ;  
With rocks encompass'd, save that to the south  
Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge  
Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close.  
A quiet treeless nook, with two green fields,  
A liquid pool, that glitter'd in the sun,  
And one bare dwelling ; one abode, no more !  
It seem'd the home of poverty and toil,  
Though not of want : the little fields, made green  
By husbandry of many thrifty years,

Paid cheerful tribute to the moorland house.  
There crows the cock, single in his domain :  
The small birds find in spring no thicket there  
To shroud them ; only from the neighbouring vales  
The cuckoo, straggling up to the hill-tops,  
Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.

“ Ah ! what a sweet recess,” thought I, “ is here ! ”  
Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease  
Upon a bed of heath — “ full many a spot  
Of hidden beauty have I chanced t’ espy  
Among the mountains ; never one like this ;  
So lonesome, and so perfectly secure :  
Not melancholy — no, for it is green,  
And bright, and fertile, furnish’d in itself  
With the few needful things that life requires.  
In rugged arms how soft it seems to lie,  
How tenderly protected ! Far and near  
We have an image of the pristine earth,  
The planet in its nakedness ; were this  
Man’s only dwelling, sole appointed seat,  
First, last, and single, in the breathing world,  
It could not be more quiet : peace is here  
Or nowhere ; days unruffled by the gale  
Of public news or private ; years that pass  
Forgetfully ; uncall’d upon to pay  
The common penalties of mortal life,  
Sickness, or accident, or grief, or pain.”

On these and other kindred thoughts intent,  
In silence by my comrade’s side I lay,  
He also silent : when, from out the heart  
Of that profound abyss, a solemn voice,  
Or several voices in one solemn sound,  
Was heard ascending ; mournful, deep, and slow  
The cadence, as of psalms — a funeral dirge !  
We listen’d, looking down towards the hut,



But seeing no one : meanwhile from below  
The strain continued, spiritual as before ;  
And now distinctly could I recognize  
These words :—“ *Shall in the grave thy love be known,  
In death thy faithfulness ?* ” “ God rest his soul ! ”  
The Wand’rer cried, abruptly breaking silence ;  
“ He is departed, and finds peace at last ! ”

This scarcely spoken, and those holy strains  
Not ceasing, forth appear’d in view a band  
Of rustic persons from behind the hut,  
Bearing a coffin in the midst, with which  
They shaped their course along the sloping side  
Of that small valley, singing as they moved ;  
A sober company and few, the men  
Bareheaded, and all decently attired.  
Some steps when they had thus advanced, the dirge  
Ended ; and, from the stillness that ensued  
Recovering, to my friend I said, “ You spake,  
Methought, with apprehension that these rites  
Are paid to him upon whose shy retreat  
This day we purposed to intrude.” “ I did so ;  
But let us hence, that we may learn the truth.  
Perhaps it is not he, but some one else,  
For whom this pious service is perform’d ;  
Some other tenant of the solitude.”

So, to a steep and difficult descent  
Trusting ourselves, we wound from crag to crag,  
Where passage could be won ; and, as the last  
Of the mute train upon the heathy top  
Of that off-sloping outlet disappear’d,  
I, more impatient in the course I took,  
Had landed upon easy ground, and there  
Stood waiting for my comrade. When, behold  
An object that enticed my steps aside !  
It was an entry, narrow as a door,

A passage whose brief windings open'd out  
Into a platform, that lay, sheepfold-wise,  
Enclosed between a single mass of rock  
And one old moss-grown wall ; a cool recess,  
And fanciful ! For, where the rock and wall  
Met in an angle, hung a tiny roof,  
Or penthouse, which most quaintly had been framed  
By thrusting two rude sticks into the wall  
And overlaying them with mountain sods ;  
To weather-fend a little turf-built seat,  
Whereon a full-grown man might rest, nor dread  
The burning sunshine, or a transient shower ;  
But the whole plainly wrought by children's hands !  
Whose simple skill had throng'd the grassy floor  
With work of frame less solid, a proud show  
Of baby-houses, curiously arranged ;  
Nor wanting ornament of walks between,  
With mimic trees inserted in the turf,  
And gardens interposed. Pleased with the sight,  
I could not choose but beckon to my guide,  
Who, having enter'd, carelessly look'd round,  
And now would have pass'd on, when I exclaim'd,  
“ Lo ! what is here ? ” and, stooping down, drew forth  
A book, that, in the midst of stones and moss,  
And wreck of particolour'd earthenware,  
Aptly disposed, had lent its help to raise  
One of those pretty structures. “ Gracious Heaven ! ”  
The Wanderer cried, “ it cannot but be his,  
And he is gone ! ” The book, which in my hand  
Had open'd of itself, (for it was swoln  
With searching damp, and seemingly had lain  
To th' injurious elements exposed  
From week to week,) I found to be a work  
In the French tongue, a novel of Voltaire,  
His famous “ Optimist. ” “ Unhappy man ! ”  
Exclaim'd my friend ; “ here, then, has been to him  
Retreat within retreat, a sheltering-place

Within how deep a shelter ! He had fits,  
Even to the last, of genuine tenderness,  
And loved the haunts of children ; here, no doubt,  
He sometimes play'd with them ; and here hath sate  
Far oft'ner by himself. This book, I guess,  
Hath been forgotten in his careless way,  
Left here when he was occupied in mind,  
And by the cottage children has been found.  
Heaven bless them, and their inconsiderate work ;  
To what odd purpose have the darlings turn'd  
This sad memorial of their hapless friend ! ”

“ Me,” said I, “ most doth it surprise, to find  
Such book in such a place ! ” “ A book it is,”  
He answer'd, “ to the person suited well,  
Though little suited to surrounding things ;  
Nor, with the knowledge which my mind possess'd,  
Could I behold it undisturb'd : 'tis strange,  
I grant, and stranger still had been to see  
The man who was its owner dwelling here  
With one poor shepherd, far from all the world !  
Now, if our errand hath been thrown away,  
As from these intimations I forbode,  
Grieved shall I be — less for my sake than yours,  
And least of all for him who is no more. ”

By this, the book was in the old man's hand :  
And he continued, glancing on the leaves  
An eye of scorn : — “ The lover,” said he, “ doom'd  
To love when hope hath fail'd him, whom no depth  
Of privacy is deep enough to hide,  
Hath yet his bracelet or his lock of hair,  
And that is joy to him. When change of times  
Hath summon'd kings to scaffolds, do but give  
The faithful servant, who must hide his head  
Henceforth in whatsoever nook he may,  
A kerchief sprinkled with his master's blood,

And he too hath his comforter. How poor  
Beyond all poverty, how destitute,  
Must that man have been left, who, hither driven,  
Flying or seeking, could yet bring with him  
No dearer relic, and no better stay,  
Than this dull product of a scoffer's pen,  
Impure conceits discharging from the heart  
Harden'd by impious pride ! I did not fear  
To tax you with this journey," mildly said  
My venerable friend, as forth we stepp'd  
Into the presence of the cheerful light ;  
" For I have knowledge that you do not shrink  
From moving spectacles ; but let us on."  
So speaking, on he went, and at the word  
I follow'd, till he made a sudden stand ;  
For full in view, approaching through the gate,  
That open'd from the inclosure of green fields  
Into the rough uncultivated ground,  
Behold the man whom he had fancied dead !  
I knew, from the appearance and the dress,  
That it could be no other : a pale face,  
A tall and meagre person, in a garb  
Not rustic, — dull and faded like himself !  
He saw us not, though distant but few steps ;  
For he was busy dealing from a store,  
Which on a leaf he carried on his hand,  
Strings of ripe currants ; gift by which he strove,  
With intermixture of endearing words,  
To soothe a child who walked beside him, weeping  
As if disconsolate. " They to the grave  
Are bearing him, my little one," he said—  
" To the dark pit, but he will feel no pain ;  
His body is at rest, his soul in heaven."

Glad was my comrade now, though he at first,  
I doubt not, had been more surprised than glad.  
But now, recover'd from the shock, and calm,

He soberly advanced, and to the man  
Gave cordial greeting. Vivid was the light  
Which flash'd at this from out the other's eyes ;  
He was all fire ; the sickness from his face  
Pass'd like a fancy that is swept away.  
Hands join'd he with his visitant, — a grasp,  
An eager grasp ; and, many moments' space,  
When the first glow of pleasure was no more,  
And much of what had vanish'd was return'd,  
An amicable smile retain'd the life,  
Which it had unexpectedly received,  
Upon his hollow cheek. "How kind," he said ;  
"Nor could your coming have been better timed ;  
For this, you see, is in our narrow world  
A day of sorrow. I have here a charge"—  
And, speaking thus, he patted tenderly  
The sunburnt forehead of the weeping child—  
"A little mourner, whom it is my task  
To comfort ; but how came ye ? If yon track  
(Which doth at once befriend us and betray)  
Conducted hither your most welcome feet,  
Ye could not miss the funeral train ; they yet  
Have scarcely disappear'd." "This blooming child,"  
Said the old man, "is of an age to weep  
At any grave or solemn spectacle ;  
Inly distress'd, or overpower'd with awe,  
He knows not why ; but he, perchance, this day  
Is shedding orphan's tears ; and you yourself  
Must have sustain'd a loss." "The hand of Death,"  
He answer'd, "has been here ; but could not well  
Have fallen more lightly, if it had not fallen  
Upon myself." The other left these words  
Unnoticed, thus continuing :—

"From yon crag,  
Down whose steep sides we dropp'd into the vale,  
We heard the hymn they sang—a solemn sound  
Heard anywhere, but in a place like this



'Tis more than human ! Many precious rites  
And customs of our rural ancestry  
Are gone, or stealing from us ; this, I hope,  
Will last for ever. Oft have I stopp'd  
When on my way, I could not choose but stop,  
So much I felt the awfulness of life,  
In that one moment when the corse is lifted  
In silence, with a hush of decency,  
Then from the threshold moves with songs of peace,  
And confidential yearnings, to its home,  
Its final home in earth. What traveller — who  
(How far soe'er a stranger) does not own  
The bond of brotherhood, when he sees them go,  
A mute procession, on the houseless road,  
Or passing by some single tenement  
Or cluster'd dwellings, where again they raise  
The monitory voice ? But most of all  
It touches, it confirms, and elevates,  
Then, when the body, soon to be consign'd  
Ashes to ashes, dust bequeath'd to dust,  
Is raised from the church-aisle, and forward borne  
Upon the shoulders of the next in love,  
The nearest in affection or in blood ;  
Yea, by the very mourners who had knelt  
Beside the coffin, resting on its lid  
In silent grief their unuplifted heads,  
And heard meanwhile the Psalmist's mournful plaint,  
And that most awful scripture which declares  
We shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed !  
Have I not seen ? — ye likewise may have seen  
Son, husband, brothers — brothers side by side,  
And son and father, also side by side,  
Rise from that posture ; and in concert move,  
On the green turf following the vested priest,  
Four dear supporters of one senseless weight,  
From which they do not shrink, and under which  
They faint not, but advance towards the grave



Step after step — together with their firm  
Unhidden faces ; he that suffers most,  
He outwardly, and inwardly, perhaps,  
The most serene, with most undaunted eye ;  
Oh ! blest are they who live and die like these,  
Loved with such love, and with such sorrow mourn'd !

“ That poor man taken hence to-day,” replied  
The solitary, with a faint sarcastic smile,  
Which did not please me, “ must be deem'd, I fear,  
Of the unblest ; for he will surely sink  
Into his mother earth without such pomp  
Of grief, depart without occasion given  
By him for such array of fortitude,  
Full seventy winters hath he lived — and mark !  
This simple child will mourn his one short hour,  
And I shall miss him ; scanty tribute ! yet,  
This wanting, he would leave the sight of men,  
If love were his sole claim upon their care,  
Like a ripe date which in the desert falls  
Without a hand to gather it.” At this  
I interposed, though loath to speak, and said,  
“ Can it be thus, among so small a band  
As ye must needs be here ? In such a place  
I would not willingly, methinks, lose sight  
Of a departing cloud.” “ 'Twas not for love,”  
Answer'd the sick man, with a careless voice,  
“ That I came hither ; neither have I found,  
Among associates who have power of speech,  
Nor in such other converse as is here,  
Temptation so prevailing as to change  
That mood, or undermine my first resolve.”  
Then, speaking in like careless sort, he said  
To my benign companion, — “ Pity 'tis  
That fortune did not guide you to this house  
A few days earlier ; then would you have seen  
What stuff the dwellers in this solitude

(That seems by Nature framed to be the seat  
And very bosom of pure innocence)  
Are made of ; an ungracious matter this !  
Which, for truth's sake, yet in remembrance, too,  
Of past discussions with this zealous friend  
And advocate of humble life, I now  
Will force upon his notice undeterr'd  
By the example of his own pure course,  
And that respect and deference which a soul  
May fairly claim, by niggard age enrich'd  
In what it values most — the love of God  
And His frail creature man ; but ye shall hear.  
I talk — and ye are standing in the sun  
Without refreshment !”

Saying this he led

Towards the cottage : homely was the spot,  
And to my feeling, ere we reach'd the door,  
Had almost a forbidding nakedness ;  
Less fair, I grant, even painfully less fair,  
Than it appear'd when from the valley's brink  
We had look'd down upon it. All within,  
As left by the departed company,  
Was silent ; and the solitary clock  
Tick'd, as I thought, with melancholy sound.  
Following our guide, we clomb the cottage stairs  
And reach'd a small apartment dark and low,  
Which was no sooner enter'd than our host  
Said gaily, “This is my domain, my cell,  
My hermitage, my cabin — what you will ;  
I love it better than a snail his house.  
But now ye shall be feasted with our best.”  
So, with more ardour than an unripe girl  
Left one day mistress of her mother's stores,  
He went about his hospitable task.  
My eyes were busy, and my thoughts no less ;  
And pleased I look'd upon my grey-hair'd friend,  
As if to thank him ; he return'd that look,

Cheer'd plainly, and yet serious. What a wreck  
We had around us ! scatter'd was the floor,  
And, in like sort, chair, window-seat, and shelf,  
With books, maps, fossils, wither'd plants and flowers,  
And tufts of mountain moss ; and here and there,  
Lay, intermix'd with these, mechanic tools,  
And scraps of paper, — some I could perceive  
Scribbled with verse : a broken angling-rod  
And shatter'd telescope, together link'd  
By cobwebs, stood within a dusty nook ;  
And instruments of music, some half-made,  
Some in disgrace, hung dangling from the walls.  
But speedily the promise was fulfill'd ;  
A feast before us, and a courteous host  
Inviting us in glee to sit and eat.  
A napkin, white as foam of that rough brook  
By which it had been bleach'd, o'erspread the board ;  
And was itself half-cover'd with a load  
Of dainties, — oaten bread, curds, cheese, and cream,  
And cakes of butter curiously emboss'd,  
Butter that had imbibed a golden tinge,  
A hue like that of yellow meadow flowers  
Faintly reflected in a silent pool.  
Nor lack'd, for more delight on that warm day,  
Our table small parade of garden fruits,  
And whortle-berries from the mountain-sides.  
The child, who long ere this had still'd his sobs,  
Was now a help to his late comforter,  
And moved, a willing page, as he was bid,  
Ministering to our need.

In genial mood,  
While at our pastoral banquet thus we sate  
Fronting the window of that little cell,  
I could not ever and anon forbear  
To glance an upward look on two huge peaks,  
That from some other vale peer'd into this.  
“Those lusty twins, on which your eyes are cast,”

✓ Exclaim'd our host, "if here you dwelt, would be  
 Your prized companions. Many are the notes  
 Which, in his tuneful course, the wind draws forth  
 From rocks, woods, caverns, heaths, and dashing shores;  
 And well those lofty brethren bear their part  
 In the wild concert — chiefly when the storm  
 Rides high; then all the upper air they fill  
 With roaring sound, that ceases not to flow  
 Like smoke along the level of the blast,  
 In mighty current; theirs, too, is the song  
 Of stream and headlong flood that seldom fails;  
 And, in the grim and breathless hour of noon,  
 Methinks that I have heard them echo back  
 The thunder's greeting: nor have Nature's laws  
 Left them ungifted with a power to yield  
 Music of finer tone; a harmony,  
 So do I call it, though it be the hand  
 Of silence, — though there be no voice; the clouds,  
 The mist, the shadows, light of golden suns,  
 Motions of moonlight, all come thither — touch,  
 And have an answer — thither come, and shape  
 A language not unwelcome to sick hearts  
 And idle spirits: there the sun himself,  
 At the calm close of summer's longest day,  
 Rests his substantial orb; between those heights,  
 And on the top of either pinnacle,  
 More keenly than elsewhere in night's blue vault,  
 Sparkle the stars, as of their station proud.  
 Thoughts are not busier in the mind of man  
 Than the mute agents stirring there: — alone  
 ✓ Here do I sit and watch."

With bright'ning face  
 The Wanderer heard him speaking thus, and said,  
 "Now for the tale with which you threaten'd us!"  
 "In truth the threat escaped me unawares,  
 And was forgotten. Let this challenge stand  
 For my excuse, if what I shall relate

Tire your attention. Outcast and cut off  
As we seem here, and must have seem'd to you  
When ye look'd down upon us from the crag,  
Islanders of a stormy mountain sea,  
We are not so ; perpetually we touch  
Upon the vulgar ordinance of the world,  
And he, whom this our cottage hath to-day  
Relinquish'd, was dependent for his bread  
Upon the laws of public charity.  
The housewife, tempted by such slender gains  
As might from that occasion be distill'd,  
Open'd, as she before had done for me,  
Her doors, t' admit this homeless pensioner ;  
The portion gave of course but wholesome fare  
Which appetite required — a blind dull nook  
Such as she had, the *kenel* of his rest !  
This, in itself not ill, would yet have been  
Ill borne in earlier life : but his was now  
The still contentedness of seventy years,  
Calm did he sit beneath the wide-spread tree  
Of his old age ; and yet less calm and meek,  
Winningly meek or venerably calm,  
Than slow and torpid ; paying in this wise  
A penalty, if penalty it were,  
For spendthrift feats, excesses of his prime.  
I loved the old man for I pitied him.  
A task it was, I own, to hold discourse  
With one so slow in gathering up his thoughts,  
But he was a cheap pleasure to my eyes ;  
Mild, inoffensive, ready in *his* way,  
And useful to his utmost power : and there  
Our housewife knew full well what she possess'd ;  
He was her vassal of all labour, till'd  
Her garden, from the pasture fetch'd her kine ;  
And, one among the orderly array  
Of haymakers, beneath the burning sun  
Maintain'd his place ; or heedfully pursued



His course, on errands bound to other vales,  
Leading sometimes an inexperienced child  
Too young for any profitable task.  
So moved he like a shadow that perform'd  
Substantial service. Mark me now, and learn  
For what reward. The moon her monthly round  
Hath not completed since our dame, the queen  
Of this one cottage and this lonely dale,  
Into my little sanctuary rush'd,—  
Voice to a rueful treble humanized,  
And features in deplorable dismay:  
I treat the matter lightly, but alas!  
It is most serious. From mid-noon the rain  
Had fallen in torrents; all the mountain-tops  
Were hidden, and black vapours coursed their sides;  
This had I seen, and saw; but, till she spake,  
Was wholly ignorant that my ancient friend—  
Who at her bidding, early and alone,  
Had clomb aloft to delve the moorland turf  
For winter fuel, to his noontide meal  
Came not, and now perchance upon the heights  
Lay at the mercy of this raging storm.  
'Inhuman!' said I; 'was an old man's life  
Not worthy the trouble of a thought—alas!  
This notice comes to late.' With joy I saw  
Her husband enter from a distant vale.  
We sallied forth together; found the tools  
Which the neglected veteran had dropp'd,  
But through all quarters look'd for him in vain.  
We shouted—but no answer! Darkness fell  
Without remission of the blast or shower,  
And fears for <sup>our</sup> own safety drove us home.  
I, who weep little, did, I will confess,  
The moment I was seated here alone,  
Honour my little cell with some few tears  
Which anger and resentment could not dry.  
All night the storm endured; and, soon as help



Had been collected from the neighbouring vale,  
With morning we renew'd our quest : the wind  
Was fall'n, the rain abated, but the hills  
Lay shrouded in impenetrable mist ;  
And long and hopelessly we sought in vain,  
Till, chancing on that lofty ridge to pass  
A heap of ruin, almost without walls  
And wholly without roof (in ancient time  
It was a chapel, a small edifice,  
In which the peasants of these lonely dells  
For worship met upon that central height) —  
Chancing to pass this wreck of stones, we there  
Espied at last the object of our search,  
Couch'd in a nook, and seemingly alive.  
It would have moved you, had you seen the guise  
In which he occupied his chosen bed,  
Lying full three parts buried among tufts  
Of heath-plant under and above him strown,  
To baffle, as he might, the watery storm :  
And there we found him breathing peaceably ;  
Snug as a child that hides itself in sport  
'Mid a green haycock in a sunny field.  
We spake — he made reply, but would not stir  
At our entreaty ; less from want of power  
Than apprehension and bewildering thoughts.  
So was he lifted gently from the ground,  
And with their freight the shepherds homeward moved  
Through the dull mist, I following — when a step,  
A single step, that freed me from the skirts  
Of the blind vapour, open'd to my view  
Glory beyond all glory ever seen  
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul !  
Though I am conscious that no power of words  
Can body forth, no hues of speech can paint  
That gorgeous spectacle — too bright and fair  
Even for remembrance ; yet the attempt may give  
Collateral interest to this homely tale.

The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,  
Was of a mighty city — boldly say  
A wilderness of building — sinking far  
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,  
Far sinking into splendour — without end !  
Fabric it seem'd of diamond and of gold,  
With alabaster domes and silver spires :  
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high  
Uplifted ; here serene pavillions bright,  
In avenues disposed ; there, towers begirt  
With battlements, that on their restless fronts  
Bore stars — illumination of all gems !  
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought  
Upon the dark materials of the storm  
Now pacified ; on them, and on the coves  
And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto  
The vapours had receded, taking there  
Their station under a cerulean sky.  
Oh, 'twas an unimaginable sight !  
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks, and emerald turf,  
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,  
Confused commingled, mutually inflamed,  
Molten together, and composing thus,  
Each lost in each, that marvellous array  
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge  
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,  
In fleecy folds voluminous enwrapp'd.  
Right in the midst, where interspace appear'd  
Of open court, an object like a throne  
Under a shining canopy of state  
Stood fix'd ; and fix'd resemblances were seen  
To implements of ordinary use,  
But vast in size, in substance glorified ;  
Such as by Hebrew prophets were beheld  
In visions — forms uncouth of mightiest power,  
For admiration and mysterious awe.  
Below me was the earth ; this little vale,

Lay low beneath my feet ; 'twas visible —  
I saw not, but I felt, that it was there.  
That which I *saw* was the reveal'd abode  
Of spirits in beatitude : my heart  
Swell'd in my breast. 'I have been dead,' I cried,  
'And now I live ! Oh ! wherefore do I live ?'  
And with that pang I prayed to be no more !  
But I forget our charge — as utterly  
I then forgot him — there I stood and gazed ;  
The apparition faded not away,  
And I descended. Having reach'd the house,  
I found its rescued inmate safely lodged,  
And in serene possession of himself,  
Beside a genial fire that seem'd to spread  
A gleam of comfort o'er his pallid face.  
Great show of joy the housewife made, and truly  
Was glad to find her conscience set at ease ;  
And not less glad, for sake of her good name,  
That the poor sufferer had escaped with life.  
But, though he seem'd at first to have received  
No harm, and, uncomplaining as before,  
Went through his usual tasks, a silent change  
Soon shew'd itself ; he linger'd three short weeks ;  
And from the cottage hath been borne to-day.

"So ends my dolorous tale, and glad I am  
That it is ended." At these words he turn'd —  
And, with blithe air of open fellowship,  
Brought from the cupboard wine and stouter cheer,  
Like one who would be merry. Seeing this  
My grey-friend said courteously — "Nay, nay,  
You have regaled us as a hermit ought ;  
Now let us forth into the sun !" Our host  
Rose, though reluctantly, and forth we went.

## BOOK III.

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### DESPONDENCY.

Images in the Valley — Another recess in it entered and described — Wanderer's sensations — Solitary's excited by the same objects — Contrast between these — Despondency of the Solitary gently reprov'd — Conversation exhibiting the Solitary's past and present opinions and feelings, till he enters upon his own history at length — His domestic felicity — Afflictions — Dejection — Roused by the French Revolution — Disappointment and disgust — Voyage to America — Disappointment and disgust pursue him — His return — His languor and depression of mind, from want of faith in the great truths of religion, and want of confidence in the virtue of mankind.

A HUMMING bee — a little tinkling rill —  
A pair of falcons wheeling on the wing,  
In clamorous agitation, round the crest  
Of a tall rock, their airy citadel —  
By each and all of these the pensive ear  
Was greeted, in the silence that ensued,  
When through the cottage threshold we had pass'd,  
And, deep within that lonesome valley, stood  
Once more beneath the concave of the blue  
And cloudless sky. Anon, exclaim'd our host,  
Triumphantly dispersing with the taunt  
The shade of discontent which on his brow  
Had gather'd, — "Ye have left my cell — but see  
Now Nature hems you in with friendly arms!  
And by her help ye are my prisoners still.  
But which way shall I lead you? — how contrive,  
In spot so parsimoniously endow'd,  
That the brief hours which yet remain may reap  
Some recompence of knowledge or delight?"  
So saying, round he look'd, as if perplex'd;

And, to remove those doubts, my grey-hair'd friend  
Said — "Shall we take this pathway for our guide? —  
Upwards it winds, as if, in summer heats,  
Its lines had first been fashion'd by the flock  
A place of refuge seeking at the root  
Of yon black yew-tree, whose protruded boughs  
Darken the silver bosom of the crag  
From which it draws its meagre sustenance.  
There in commodious shelter may we rest.  
Or let us trace this streamlet to its source ;  
Feebly it tinkles with an earthy sound,  
And a few steps may bring us to the spot  
Where, haply, crown'd with flow'rets and green herbs,  
The mountain infant to the sun comes forth,  
Like human life from darkness." At the word  
We follow'd where he led. A sudden turn  
Through a straight passage of encumber'd ground,  
Proved that such hope was vain : for now we stood  
Shut out from prospect of the open vale,  
And saw the water that composed this rill,  
Descending, disembodied, and diffused  
O'er the smooth surface of an ample crag,  
Lofty, and steep, and naked as a tower.  
All further progress here was barr'd. "And who,"  
Thought I, "if master of a vacant hour,  
Here would not linger, willingly detain'd?  
Whether to such wild objects he were led  
When copious rains have magnified the stream  
Into a loud and white-robed waterfall,  
Or introduced at this more quiet time."

Upon a semicirque of turf-clad ground,\*

\* These lines have been quoted *ad nauseum* as descriptive of the Bowder Stone in Borrowdale. That singular fragment, if it resembles a ship, rests *on* its keel, or narrow edge ; whereas, the stone here described, lies "*with keel upturned*." Miss Martineau, with her usual keenness, notices this mistake of the guide books.



The hidden nook discover'd to our view  
A mass of rock, resembling, as it lay  
Right at the foot of that moist precipice,  
A stranded ship, with keel upturn'd, — that rests  
Fearless of winds and waves. Three several stones  
Stood near of smaller size, and not unlike  
To monumental pillars : and, from these  
Some little space disjoined, a pair were seen,  
That with united shoulders bore aloft  
A fragment, like an altar, flat and smooth.  
Barren the tablet, yet thereon appear'd,  
Conspicuously station'd, one fair plant,  
A tall and shining holly, that had found  
A hospitable chink, and stood upright,  
As if inserted by some human hand  
In mockery, to wither in the sun,  
Or lay its beauty flat before a breeze,  
The first that enter'd. But no breeze did now  
Find entrance ; high or low appear'd no trace  
Of motion, save the water that descended,  
Diffused adown that barrier of steep rock,  
And softly creeping, like a breath of air,  
Such as is sometimes seen, and hardly seen,  
To brush the still breast of a crystal lake.

“ Behold a cabinet for sages built,  
Which kings might envy ! ” Praise to this effect  
Broke from the happy old man's reverend lips ;  
Who to the Solitary turn'd, and said,  
“ In sooth, with love's familiar privilege,  
You have decried, in no unseemly terms  
Of modesty, that wealth which is your own.  
Among these rocks and stones, methinks, I see  
More than the heedless impress that belongs  
To lonely nature's casual work ; they bear  
A semblance strange of power intelligent,  
And of design not wholly worn away.



Boldest of plants that ever faced the wind,  
 How gracefully that slender shrub looks forth  
 From its fantastic birthplace ! And I own,\*  
 Some shadowy intimations haunt me here,  
 I cannot but incline to a belief  
 That in these shows a chronicle survives  
 Of purposes akin to those of man,  
 But wrought with mightier arm than now prevails.  
 Voiceless the stream descends into the gulf  
 With timid lapse ; and lo ! while in this strait  
 I stand — the chasm of the sky above my head  
 Is heaven's profoundest azure ; no domain  
 For fickle, short-lived clouds to occupy,  
 Or to pass through, but rather an abyss  
 In which the everlasting stars abide ;  
 And whose soft gloom and boundless depth might tempt  
 The curious eye to look for them by day.  
 Hail contemplation ! from the stately towers,  
 Rear'd by th' industrious hand of human art  
 To lift thee high above the misty air,  
 And turbulence of murmuring cities vast ;  
 From academic groves, that have for thee  
 Been planted, hither come and find a lodge  
 To which thou mayest resort for holier peace, —  
 From whose calm centre thou, through height or depth,  
 Mayest penetrate, wherever truth shall lead ;  
 Measuring through all degrees ~~under~~ the scale *untold*  
 Of time and conscious nature disappear,  
 Lost in unsearchable eternity ! "

\* Wordsworth loved to second nature in these her fantastic moods : he would, for instance, pluck holly berries and invite some friend to accompany him on to the neighbouring fell on a planting expedition. There, clambering among the highest rocks, he would drop the berries in such nooks and crannies as he deemed nature would have chosen, saying, "I do this for posterity. Some people are selfish enough to say, what has posterity done for me ? but the past does much for us all ! "

A pause ensued ; and with minuter care  
We scann'd the various features of the scene :  
And soon the tenant of that lonely vale  
With courteous voice thus spake : —

“ I should have grieved  
Hereafter — should perhaps have blamed myself —  
If from my poor retirement ye had gone  
Leaving this nook unvisited ; but, in sooth,  
Your unexpected presence had so roused  
My spirits, that they were bent on enterprise ;  
And, like an ardent hunter, I forgot,  
Or, shall I say — disdain'd — the game that lurk'd  
At my own door. The shapes before our eyes,  
And their arrangement, doubtless must be deem'd  
The sport of Nature, aided by blind Chance,  
Rudely to mock the works of toiling man.  
And hence, this upright shaft of unhewn stone,  
From fancy, willing to set off her stores  
By sounding titles, hath acquired the name  
Of Pompey's Pillar ; that I gravely style  
My Theban obelisk ; and, there, behold  
A Druid cromlech ! — thus I entertain  
The antiquarian humour, and am pleased  
To skim along the surfaces of things,  
Beguiling harmlessly the listless hours.  
But if the spirit be oppress'd by sense  
Of instability, revolt, decay,  
And change, and emptiness, these freaks of Nature  
And her blind helper Chance, do *then* suffice  
To quicken, and to aggravate, to feed  
Pity and scorn, and melancholy pride,  
Not less than that huge pile (from some abyss  
Of mortal power unquestionably sprung)  
Whose hoary diadem of pendant rocks  
Confines the shrill-voiced whirlwind, round and round  
Eddying within its vast circumference,  
On Sarum's naked plain — than pyramid

Of Egypt, unsubverted, undissolved ;\*  
Or Syria's marble ruins towering high  
Above the sandy desert, in the light  
Of sun or moon. Forgive me, if I say  
That an appearance, which hath raised your minds  
To an exalted pitch (the self-same cause  
Different effect producing) is for me  
Fraught rather with depression than delight,  
Though shame it were, could I not look around me,  
By the reflection of your pleasure pleased.  
Yet happier, in my judgement, even than you,  
With your bright transports, fairly may be deem'd,  
Is he (if such have ever entered here)  
The wandering herbalist,—who, clear alike  
From vain, and that worse evil, vexing thoughts,  
Casts on these uncouth forms a slight regard  
Of transitory interest, and peeps round  
For some rare flow'ret of the hills, or plant  
Of craggy fountain ; what he hopes for, wins,  
Or learns, at least, that 'tis not to be won :  
Then, keen and eager, as a fine-nosed hound  
By soul-engrossing instinct driven along  
Through wood or open field, the harmless man  
Departs, intent upon his onward quest !  
Nor is that fellow-wanderer, so deem I,  
Less to be envied (you may trace him oft

\* The reader will not be displeased to compare this passage with the opening lines of Granger's "Ode on Solitude."

"O Solitude, romantick maid,  
Whether by nodding towers you tread ;  
Or haunt the deserts trackless gloom,  
Or hover o'er the yawning tomb ;  
Or climb the Andes' clifted side,  
Or by the Nile's coy source abide ;  
Or, starting from your half-year's sleep,  
From Hecla view the thawing deep :  
Or, at the purple dawn of day,  
Tadmor's marble wastes survey."

By scars which his activity has left  
Beside our roads and pathways, though, thank Heaven !  
This covert nook reports not of his hand,)   
He, who with pocket-hammer smites the edge  
Of every luckless rock or stone that stands  
Before his sight, by weather-stains disguised,  
Or crusted o'er with vegetation thin,  
Nature's first growth — detaching by the stroke  
A chip or splinter to resolve his doubts —  
And, with that ready answer satisfied,  
Doth to the substance give some barbarous name,  
Then hurries on ; or from the fragments picks  
His specimen, if haply intervein'd  
With sparkling mineral, or should crystal tube  
Be lodged therein—and thinks himself enrich'd,  
Wealthier, and doubtless wiser, than before !  
Intrusted safely each to his pursuit,  
This earnest pair may range from hill to hill,  
And, if it please them, speed from clime to clime ;  
The mind is full—no pain is in their sport."

"Then," said I, interposing, "one is near  
Who cannot but possess in your esteem  
Place worthier still of envy. May I name,  
Without offence, that fair-faced cottage-boy—  
Dame Nature's pupil of the lowest form—  
Youngest apprentice in the school of art ?  
Him, as we enter'd from the open glen,  
You might have noticed, busily engaged—  
Heart, soul, and hands,—in mending the defects  
Left in the fabric of a leaky dam,  
Framed for enabling this penurious stream  
To turn a slender mill (that new-made plaything)  
For his delight—the happiest he of all !"

"Far happiest," answer'd the desponding man,  
"If, such as now he is, he might remain !"

Ah ! what avails imagination high  
 Or question deep ? What profits all that earth,  
 Or heaven's blue vault, is suffer'd to put forth  
 Of impulse or allurements, for the soul  
 To quit the beaten track of life, and soar  
 Far as she finds a yeilding element  
 In past or future ; far as she can go  
 Through time or space—if neither in the one,  
 Nor in the other region, nor in aught  
 That fancy, dreaming o'er the map of things,  
 Hath placed beyond these penetrable bounds,  
 Words of assurance can be heard—if nowhere  
 A habitation, for consummate good,  
 Or for progressive virtue, by the search  
 Can be attain'd, a better sanctuary  
 From doubt and sorrow, than the senseless grave ? ”

“ Is this,” the grey-hair'd wanderer mildly said,  
 “ The voice which we so lately overhead  
 To that same child addressing tenderly  
 The consolations of a hopeful mind ?  
*‘ His body is at rest—his soul in heaven.’*  
 These were your words ; and, verily, methinks  
 Wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop  
 Than when we soar.”

The other, not displeased,  
 Promptly replied :—“ My notion is the same ;  
 And I, without reluctance, could decline  
 All act of inquisition whence we rise,  
 And what, when breath hath ceased, we may become.  
 Here are we, in a bright and breathing world !  
 Our origin, what matters it ? In lack  
 Of worthier explanation, say at once  
 With the American (a thought which suits  
 The place were now we stand) that certain men  
 Leapt out together from a rocky cave ;  
 And these were the first parents of mankind :



Or, if a different image be recall'd  
By the warm sunshine, and the jocund voice  
Of insects chirping out their careless lives  
On these soft beds of thyme-besprinkled turf,  
Choose, with the gay Athenian, a conceit  
As sound—with that blithe race who wore erewhile  
Their golden grasshoppers, in sign that they  
Had sprung from out the soil whereon they dwelt.  
But stop!—these theoretic fancies jar  
On serious minds; for doubtless, in one sense,  
The theme *is* serious; then, as Hindoos draw  
Their holy Ganges, from a skiey fount,  
Even so deduce the stream of human life  
From seats of power divine; and hope, or trust,  
That our existence winds her stately course  
Beneath the sun, like Ganges, to make part  
Of a living ocean; or, if such may seem  
Its tendency, to be engulf'd and lost  
Like Niger, in impenetrable sands  
And utter darkness; thought which may be faced,  
Though comfortless! Not of myself I speak;  
Such acquiescence neither doth imply,  
In me, a meekly-bending spirit, soothed  
By natural piety; nor a lofty mind,  
By philosophic discipline prepared  
For calm subjection to acknowledged law;  
Pleased to have been, contented not to be.  
Such palms I boast not; no! to me, who find,  
Reviewing my past way, much to condemn,  
Little to praise, and nothing to regret,  
(Save some remembrances of dream-like joys  
That scarcely seem to have belong'd to me,)  
If I must take my choice between the pair  
That rule alternately the weary hours,  
Night is than day more acceptable; sleep  
Doth, in my estimate of good, appear  
A better state than waking; death than sleep.



Feelingly sweet is stillness after storm,  
Though under covert of the wormy ground!

“Yet be it said, in justice to myself,  
That in more genial times, when I was free  
To explore the destiny of human kind;  
Not as an intellectual game pursued  
With curious subtilty, thereby to cheat  
Irrksome sensations; but by love of truth  
Urged on, or haply by intense delight  
In feeding thought, wherever thought could feed;  
I did not rank with those (too dull or nice,  
For to my judgement such they then appear'd,  
Or to aspiring, thankless at the best)  
Who, in this frame of human life, perceive  
An object whereunto their souls are tied  
In discontented wedlock; nor did e'er,  
From me, those dark, impervious shades, that hang  
Upon the region whither we are bound,  
Exclude a power to enjoy the vital beams  
Of present sunshine. Deities that float  
On wings—angelic spirits! I could muse  
O'er what from eldest time we have been told  
Of your bright forms and glorious faculties,  
And with the imagination be content,  
Not wishing more; repining not to tread  
The little sinuous path of earthly care,  
By flowers embellish'd, and by springs refresh'd.  
'Blow, winds of autumn!—let your chilling breath  
Take the live herbage from the mead, and strip  
The shady forest of its green attire,—  
And let the bursting clouds to fury rouse  
The gentle brooks! Your desolating sway,'  
Thus I exclaim'd, 'no sadness sheds on me;  
And no disorder in your rage I find.  
What dignity, what beauty, in this change  
From mild to angry, and from sad to gay,

Alternate and revolving ! How benign,  
 How rich in animation and delight,  
 How bountiful these elements—compared  
 With aught, as more desirable and fair,  
 Devised by fancy for the golden age :  
 Or the perpetual warbling that prevails  
 In Arcady, beneath unalter'd skies,  
 Through the long year in constant quiet bound,  
 Night hush'd as night, and day serene as day !'  
 But why this tedious record ? Age we know  
 Is garrulous ; and solitude is apt  
 To anticipate the privilege of age.  
 From far ye come ; and surely with a hope  
 Of better entertainment—let us hence !”

Loath to forsake the spot, and still more loath  
 To be diverted from our present theme,  
 I said, “ My thoughts, agreeing, sir, with yours,  
 Would push this censure farther : for, if smiles  
 Of scornful pity be the just reward  
 Of poesy, thus courteously employ'd  
 In framing models to improve the scheme  
 Of man's existence, and recast the world,  
 Why should not grave Philosophy be styled,  
 Herself, a dreamer of a kindred stock,  
 A dreamer yet more spiritless and dull ?  
 “ Yes,” said I, “ shall the immunities to which  
 She doth lay claim, the precepts she bestows,  
 Establish sounder titles of esteem  
 For her, who (all too timid and reserved  
 For onset, for resistance too inert,  
 Too weak for suffering and for hope too tame)  
 Did place in flow'ry gardens curtain'd round  
 With world-excluding groves, the brotherhood  
 Of soft Epicureans, taught,—if they  
 The ends of being would secure, and win  
 The crown of wisdom—to yield up their souls

To a voluptuous unconcern, preferring  
Tranquillity to all things. Or is she,"  
I cried, "more worthy of regard—the power,  
Who, for the sake of sterner quiet, closed  
The Stoic's heart against the vain approach  
Of admiration, and all sense of joy?"

His countenance gave notice that my zeal  
Accorded little with his present mind ;  
I ceased, and he resumed, "Ah ! gentle sir,  
Slight if you will, the *means* ; but spare to slight  
The *end* of those, who did, by system, rank,  
As the prime object of a wise man's aim,  
Security from shock of accident,  
Release from fear ; and cherish'd peaceful days  
For their own sakes, as mortal life's chief good,  
And only reasonable felicity.  
What motive drew, what impulse, I would ask,  
Through a long course of later ages, drove  
The hermit to his cell in forest wide ;  
Or what detain'd him, till his closing eyes  
Took their last farewell of the sun and stars,  
Fast anchor'd in the desert ? Not alone  
Dread of the persecuting sword,—remorse,  
Wrongs unredress'd, or insults unavenged  
And unavengeable, defeated pride,  
Prosperity subverted, maddening want,  
Friendship betray'd, affection unreturn'd,  
Love with despair or grief in agony :  
Not always from intolerable pangs  
He fled ; but, compass'd round by pleasure, sigh'd  
For independent happiness ; craving peace,  
The central feeling of all happiness.  
Not as a refuge from distress or pain,  
A breathing-time, vacation, or a truce,  
But for its absolute self ; a life of peace,  
Stability without regret or fear ;

That hath been, is, and shall be evermore !  
Such the reward he sought ; and wore out life,  
There, where on few external things his heart  
Was set, and those his own ; or, if not his,  
Subsisting under Nature's steadfast law.

“ What other yearning was the master tie  
Of the monastic brotherhood ; upon rock  
Aërial, or in green secluded vale,  
One after one, collected from afar,  
An undissolving fellowship ? What but this,  
The universal instinct of repose —  
The longing for confirm'd tranquillity,  
Inward and outward — humble yet sublime :  
The life where hope and memory are as one ;  
Earth quiet and unchanged ; the human soul  
Consistent in self-rule ; and heaven reveal'd  
To meditation in that quietness ! —  
Such was their scheme : thrice happy he who gain'd  
The end proposed ! And — though the same were miss'd  
By multitudes, perhaps obtain'd by none —  
They, for the attempt, and for the pains employ'd,  
Do, in my present censure, stand redeem'd  
From the unqualified disdain, that once  
Would have been cast upon them by my voice  
Delivering its decisions from the seat  
Of forward youth, that scruples not to solve  
Doubts, and determine questions, by the rules  
Of inexperienced judgement, ever prone  
To overweening faith, and is inflamed  
By courage, to demand from real life  
The test of act, and suffering to provoke  
Hostility — how dreadful when it comes,  
Whether affliction be the foe, or guilt !

“ A child of earth, I rested, in that stage  
Of my past course to which these thoughts advert,

Upon earth's native energies ; forgetting  
That mine was a condition which required  
Nor energy, nor fortitude—a calm  
Without vicissitude ; which, if the like  
Had been presented to my view elsewhere,  
I might have even been tempted to despise.  
But that which was serene was also bright ;  
Enliven'd happiness with joy o'erflowing,  
With joy, and—oh ! that memory should survive  
To speak the word—with rapture ! Nature's boon,  
Life's genuine inspiration, happiness  
Above what rules can teach, or fancy feign ;  
Abused, as all possessions are abused  
That are not prized according to their worth.  
And yet, what worth ?—what good is given to men,  
More solid than the gilded clouds of heaven,  
What joy more lasting than a vernal flower ?  
None ! 'tis the general plaint of human kind  
In solitude ; and mutually address'd  
From each to all, for wisdom's sake : this truth  
The priest announces from his holy seat ;  
And crown'd with garlands in the summer grove,  
The poet fits it to his pensive lyre.  
Yet, ere that final resting place be gain'd,  
Sharp contradictions hourly shall arise  
To cross the way ; and we, perchance, by doom  
Of this same life, shall be compell'd to grieve  
That the prosperities of love and joy  
Should be permitted, oftentimes, to endure  
So long, and be at once cast down for ever.  
Oh ! tremble ye to whom hath been assign'd  
A course of days composing happy months,  
And they as happy years ; the present still  
So like the past, and both so firm a pledge  
Of a congenial future, that the wheels  
Of pleasure move without the aid of hope,  
For mutability is Nature's bane ;



And slighted Hope will be avenged ; and, when  
Ye need her favours, ye shall find her not ;  
But, in her stead, fear—doubt—and agony !”

This was the bitter language of the heart ;  
But, while he spake, look, gesture, tone of voice,  
Though discomposed and vehement, were such  
As skill and graceful Nature might suggest  
To a proficient of the tragic scene,  
Standing before the multitude, beset  
With sorrowful events ; and we, who heard  
And saw, were moved. Desirous to divert,  
Or stem, the current of the speaker's thoughts,  
We signified a wish to leave that place  
Of stillness and close privacy, which seem'd  
A nook for self-examination framed  
Or for confession in the sinner's need,  
Hidden from all men's view. To our attempt  
He yielded not ; but, pointing to a slope  
Of mossy turf, defended from the sun ;  
And, on that couch inviting us to rest,  
Towards that tender-hearted man he turn'd  
A serious eye, and thus his speech renew'd :—

“ You never saw, your eyes did never look  
On the bright form of her whom once I loved ;  
Her silver voice was heard upon the earth,  
A sound unknown to you ; else, honour'd friend !  
Your heart had borne a pitiable share  
Of what I suffer'd when I wept that loss,  
And suffer now, not seldom, from the thought  
That I remember, and can weep no more.  
Stripp'd as I am of all the golden fruit  
Of self-esteem ; and by the cutting blasts  
Of self-reproach familiarly assail'd ;  
I would not yet be of such wintry bareness,  
But that some leaf of your regard should hang  
Upon my naked branches : lively thoughts



Give birth, full often, to unguarded words ;  
I grieve that, in your presence, from my tongue  
Too much of frailty hath already dropp'd ;  
But that too much demands still more.

“ You know,

Reverend compatriot ; and to you, kind sir,  
(Not to be deem'd a stranger, as you come  
Following the guidance of these welcome feet  
To our secluded vale), it may be told,  
That my demerits did not sue in vain  
To one, on whose mild radiance many gazed  
With hope, and all with pleasure. This fair bride —  
In the devotedness of youthful love,  
Preferring me to parents, and the choir  
Of gay companions, to the natal roof,  
And all known places and familiar sights  
(Resign'd with sadness gently weighing down  
Her trembling expectations, but no more  
Than did to her due honour, and to me  
Yielded, that day, a confidence sublime  
In what I had to build upon) — this bride,  
Young, modest, meek, and beautiful, I led  
To a low cottage in a sunny bay,  
Where the salt sea innocuously breaks,  
And the sea-breeze as innocently breathes,  
On Devon's leafy shores ; a shelter'd hold,  
In a soft clime encouraging the soil  
To a luxuriant bounty ! As our steps  
Approached th' embower'd abode — our chosen seat —  
See, rooted in the earth, its kindly bed,  
Th' unendanger'd myrtle, deck'd with flowers,  
Before the threshold stands to welcome us !  
While, in the flowery myrtle's neighbourhood,  
Not overlook'd, but courting no regard,  
Those native plants, the holly and the yew,  
Gave modest intimation to the mind  
Of willingness with which they would unite

With the green myrtle, t' endear the hours  
 Of winter, and protect that pleasant place.  
 Wild were the walks upon those lonely downs,\*  
 Track leading into track, how mark'd, how worn  
 Into bright verdure, among fern and gorse,  
 Winding away its never-ending line  
 On their smooth surface, evidence was none :  
 But there lay open to our daily haunt,  
 A range of unappropriated earth,  
 Where youth's ambitious feet might move at large ;  
 Whence, unmolested wanderers, we beheld  
 The shining giver of the day diffuse  
 His brightness o'er a tract of sea and land  
 Gay as our spirits, free as our desires,  
 As our enjoyments boundless. From these heights  
 We dropp'd, at pleasure, into sylvan combs ;  
 Where arbours of impenetrable shade,  
 And mossy seats, detain'd us side by side,  
 Where hearts at ease, and knowledge in our hearts,  
 'That all the grove and all the day was ours.'

" But in due season Nature interfered,  
 And call'd my partner to resign her share  
 In the pure freedom of that wedded life,  
 Enjoy'd by us in common. To my hope,  
 To my heart's wish, my tender mate became  
 The thankful captive of maternal bonds,

\* Miss Wordsworth, writing from Alfoxden in Somersetshire, where she and her brother removed to be near Coleridge, thus describes the scenery :—" We are three miles from Stowey, and not two miles from the sea, wherever we turn we have woods, smooth downs, and valleys with small brooks running down them, through green meadows, hardly ever intersected with hedgerows, but scattered over with trees ; the hills that cradle these valleys are either covered with fern and bilberries, or oak woods ;— walks extend for miles over the hill-tops ; the great beauty of which is their wild simplicity : they are perfectly smooth without rocks."  
 — *Memoir*, vol. I, p. 103.

And those wild paths were left to me alone ;  
There could I meditate on follies past,  
And, like a weary voyager escaped  
From risk and hardship, inwardly retrace  
A course of vain delights and thoughtless guilt,  
And self-indulgence—without shame pursued ;  
There, undisturb'd, could think of, and could thank  
Her—whose submissive spirit was to me  
Rule and restraint—my guardian ; shall I say  
That earthly Providence whose guiding love  
Within a port of rest had lodged me safe ;  
Safe from temptation, and from danger far ?  
Strains follow'd of acknowledgment address'd  
To an Authority enthroned above  
The reach of sight ; from whom, as from their source,  
Proceed all visible ministers of good  
That walk the earth—Father of heaven and earth,  
Father, and King, and Judge, adored and fear'd !  
These acts of mind, and memory, and heart,  
And spirit—interrupted and relieved  
By observations, transient as the glance  
Of flying sunbeams, or to th' outward form  
Cleaving, with power inherent and intense  
As the mute insect fix'd upon the plant  
On whose soft leaves it hangs, and from whose cup  
Draws imperceptibly its nourishment,  
Endear'd by wanderings ; and the mother's kiss,  
And infant's smile, awaited my return.

“ In privacy we dwelt—a wedded pair,  
Companions daily, often all day long ;  
Not placed by fortune within easy reach  
Of various intercourse, nor wishing aught  
Beyond the allowance of our own fireside,  
The twain within our happy cottage born  
Inmates, and heirs of our united love ;  
Graced mutually by difference of sex,

By the endearing names of nature bound,  
And with no wider interval of time  
Between their several births than served for one  
To establish something of a leader's sway ;  
Yet left them join'd by sympathy in age ;  
Equals in pleasure, fellows in pursuit.  
On these two pillars rested as in air  
Our solitude.

“ It soothes me to perceive,  
Your courtesy withholds not from my words  
Attentive audience. But, oh ! gentle friends,  
As times of quiet and unbroken peace,  
Though, for a nation times of blessedness,  
Give back faint echo's from th' historian's page ;  
So, in the imperfect sounds of this discourse,  
Depress'd I hear, how faithless is the voice  
Which those most blissful days reverberate.  
What special record can, or need be given  
To rules and habits, whereby much was done  
But all within the sphere of little things,  
Of humble, though to us, important cares,  
And precious interests ? Smoothly did our life  
Advance, not swerving from the path prescribed ;  
Her annual, her diurnal round alike  
Maintain'd with faithful care. And you divine  
The worst effects which our condition saw,  
If you imagine changes slowly wrought,  
And in their progress imperceptible,  
Not wish'd for, sometimes noticed with a sigh,  
(Whate'er of good or lovely they might bring),  
Sigh of regret, for the familiar good  
And loveliness endear'd — which they removed.

“ Seven years of occupation undisturb'd  
Establish'd seemingly a right to hold  
That happiness : and use and habit gave

To what an alien spirit had acquired  
A patrimonial sanctity. And thus,  
With thoughts and wishes bounded to this world,  
I lived and breathed ; most grateful,— if t' enjoy  
Without repining or desire for more,  
For different lot, or change to higher sphere  
(Only except some impulses of pride  
With no determined object, though upheld  
By theories with suitable support)—  
Most grateful, if in such wise to enjoy  
Be proof of gratitude for what we have :  
Else, I allow, most thankless. But at once  
From some dark seat of fatal power was urged  
A claim that shatter'd all. Our blooming girl,  
Caught in the gripe of death, with such brief time  
To struggle in as scarcely would allow  
Her cheek to change its colour, was convey'd  
From us to regions inaccessible,  
Where height, or depth, admits not the approach  
Of living man, though longing to pursue.  
With even as brief a warning — and how soon  
With what short interval of time between  
I tremble yet to think of — our last prop,  
Our happy life's only remaining stay —  
The brother follow'd — and was seen no more !

“Calm as a frozen lake when ruthless winds  
Blow fiercely, agitating earth and sky,  
The mother now remain'd ; as if in her,  
Who, to the lowest region of the soul,  
Had been erewhile unsettled and disturb'd,  
This second visitation had no power  
To shake — but only to bind up and seal ;  
And to establish thankfulness of heart  
In Heaven's determinations, ever just.  
The eminence on which her spirit stood,  
Mine was unable to attain. Immense



The space that sever'd us ! But, as the sight  
Communicates with heaven's ethereal orbs  
Incalculably distant ; so, I felt  
That consolation may descend from far,  
(And that is intercourse and union too),  
While, overcome with speechless gratitude,  
And with a holier love, inspired, I look'd  
On her — at once superior to my woes  
And partner of my loss. O heavy change !  
Dimness o'er this clear luminary crept  
Insensibly ; th' immortal and divine  
Yielded to mortal reflux ; her pure glory,  
As from the pinnacle of worldly state  
Wretched ambition drops astounded, fell  
Into a gulf obscure of silent grief,  
And keen heart-anguish,— of itself ashamed,  
Yet obstinately cherishing itself :  
And, so consumed, she melted from my arms ;  
And left me, on this earth, disconsolate !

“What follow'd cannot be review'd in thought,  
Much less retraced in words. If she, of life  
Blameless, so intimate with love and joy  
And all the tender motions of the soul,  
Had been supplanted, could I hope to stand,  
Infirm, dependent, and now destitute ?  
I call'd on dreams and visions to disclose  
That which is veil'd from waking thought ; conjured  
Eternity, as men constrain a ghost  
To appear and answer ; to the grave I spake  
Imploringly ; look'd up, and ask'd the heavens  
If angels traverse their cerulean floors,  
If fix'd or wandering star could tidings yield  
Of the departed spirit — what abode  
It occupies — what consciousness retains  
Of former loves and interests. Then my soul  
Turn'd inward, to examine of what stuff



Time's fetters are composed ; and life was put  
To inquisition long and profitless !  
By pain of heart now check'd — and now impell'd —  
The intellectual power, through words and things,  
Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way !  
And from those transports, and these toils abstruse,  
Some trace am I enabled to retain  
Of time, else lost ; existing unto me  
Only by records in myself not found.

“ From that abstraction I was roused,— and how ?  
Even as a thoughtful shepherd by a flash  
Of lightening startled in a gloomy cave  
Of these wild hills. For lo ! the dread Bastille,  
With all the chambers in its horrid towers,  
Fell to the ground, by violence o'erthrown  
Of indignation, and with shouts that drown'd  
The crash it made in falling ! From the wreck  
A golden palace rose, or seem'd to rise,  
The appointed seat of equitable law  
And mild paternal sway. The potent shock  
I felt ; the transformation I perceived,  
As marvellously seized as in that moment  
When, from the blind mist issuing, I beheld  
Glory, beyond all glory ever seen —  
Confusion infinite of heaven and earth,  
Dazzling the soul. Meanwhile prophetic harps  
In every grove were ringing, ‘ War shall cease ;  
Did ye not hear that conquest is abjured ?  
Bring garlands, bring forth choicest flowers, to deck  
The tree of liberty.’ My heart rebounded !  
My melancholy voice the chorus join'd :  
‘ Be joyful all ye nations in all lands,  
Ye that are capable of joy be glad !  
Henceforth, whate'er is wanting to yourselves  
In others ye shall promptly find ; and all  
Be rich by mutual and reflected wealth.’

“Thus was I reconverted to the world ;  
Society became my glittering bride,  
And airy hopes my children. From the depths  
Of natural passion seemingly escaped,  
My soul diffused itself in wide embrace  
Of institutions, and the forms of things ;  
As they exist in mutable array  
Upon life’s surface. What though in my veins  
There flow’d no Gallic blood, nor had I breathed  
The air of France, not less than Gallic zeal  
Kindled and burnt among the sapless twigs  
Of my exhausted heart. If busy men  
In sober conclave met, to weave a web  
Of amity, whose living threads should stretch  
Beyond the seas, and to the farthest pole,  
There did I sit assisting. If, with noise  
And acclamation, crowds in open air  
Express’d the tumult of their minds, my voice  
There mingled, heard or not. The powers of song  
I left not uninvoked ; and, in still groves  
Where mild enthusiasts tuned a pensive lay  
Of thanks and expectation, in accord  
With their belief I sang Saturnian rule  
Return’d, a progeny of golden years  
Permitted to descend, and bless mankind.  
With promises the Hebrew Scriptures teem :  
I felt the invitation ; and resumed  
A long-suspended office in the house  
Of public worship, where, the glowing phrase  
Of ancient inspiration serving me,  
I promised also,— with undaunted trust  
Foretold ; and added prayer to prophecy ;  
The admiration winning of the crowd,  
The help desiring of the pure devout.

“Scorn and contempt forbid me to proceed !  
But History, Time’s slavish scribe, will tell

How rapidly the zealots of the cause  
Disbanded — or in hostile ranks appear'd ;  
Some, tired of honest service ! these, outdone,  
Disgusted, therefore, or appall'd , by aims  
Of fiercer zealots — so confusion reign'd,  
And the more faithful were compell'd to exclaim,  
As Brutus did to virtue, ' Liberty,  
I worship thee, and find thee but a shade !'

“Such recantation had for me no charm,  
Nor would I bend to it ; who should have grieved  
At aught, however fair, which bore the mien  
Of a conclusion, or catastrophe.  
Why then conceal, that, when the simple good  
In timid selfishness withdrew, I sought  
Other support, not scrupulous whence it came,  
And by what compromise it stood, not nice ;  
Enough if notions seem'd to be high-pitch'd,  
And qualities determin'd. Ruling such,  
And with such herding, I maintain'd a strife  
Hopeless, and still more hopeless every hour ;  
But, in the process, I began to feel  
That, if the emancipation of the world  
Were miss'd, I should at least secure my own,  
And be in part compensated. For rights,  
Widely — inveterately usurp'd upon,  
I spake with vehemence ; and promptly seized  
Whate'er abstraction furnish'd for my needs  
Or purposes ; nor scrupled to proclaim,  
And propagate, by liberty of life,  
Those new persuasions. Not that I rejoiced,  
Or even found pleasure, in such vagrant course,  
For its own sake ; but farthest from the walk  
Which I had trod in happiness and peace,  
Was most inviting to a troubled mind  
That in a struggling and distemper'd world  
Beheld a cherish'd image of itself.

Yet mark the contradictions of which man  
Is still the sport ! Here Nature was my guide,  
The Nature of the dissolute ; but thee,  
O fostering Nature ! I rejected — smiled  
At others' tears in pity ; and in scorn  
At those, which thy soft influence sometimes drew  
From my unguarded heart. The tranquil shores  
Of Britain circumscribed me ; else, perhaps,  
I might have been entangled among deeds  
Which now, as infamous, I should abhor —  
Despise, as senseless ; for strangely relish'd  
The exasperated spirit of that land,  
Which turn'd an angry beak against the down  
Of its own breast ; as if it hoped thereby  
To disencumber its impatient wings.  
But all was quieted by iron bonds  
Of military sway. The shifting aims,  
The moral interests, the creative might,  
The varied functions and high attributes  
Of civil action, yielded to a power  
Formal, and odious, and contemptible.  
In Britain, ruled a panic dread of change ;  
The weak were praised, rewarded, and advanced ;  
And, from the impulse of a just disdain,  
Once more did I retire into myself.\*  
There feeling no contentment, I resolved  
To fly, for safeguard, to some foreign shore  
Remote from Europe, from her blasted hopes,  
Her fields of carnage, and polluted air.

\* We are informed, that in the character of the Solitary, Wordsworth gives utterance to his own ardent political hopes and glowing expectations, as well as to the sadness which subsequent events produced on his mind : a sadness from which he was aroused by the companionship of his beloved sister, who by diverting his mind from politics, left it free to follow its poetic bent.

“ Fresh blew the wind, when o’er the Atlantic main  
The ship went gliding with her thoughtless crew :  
And who among them, but an exile, freed  
From discontent, indifferent, pleased to sit  
Among the busily-employed, not more  
With obligation charged, with service tax’d,  
Than the loose pendent to the idle wind  
Upon the tall mast streaming ! But, ye powers  
Of soul and sense — mysteriously allied,  
Oh, never let the wretched, if a choice  
Be left him, trust the freight of his distress  
To a long voyage on the silent deep !  
For, like a plague, will memory break out,  
And, in the blank and solitude of things,  
Upon his spirit, with a fever’s strength,  
Will conscience prey. Feebly must they have felt  
Who, in old time, attired with snakes and whips  
The vengeful furies. *Beautiful* regards  
Were turn’d on me — the face of her I loved —  
The wife and mother — pityfully fixing  
Tender reproaches insupportable.  
Where now that boasted liberty ? No welcome  
From unknown objects I received ; and those  
Known and familiar, which the vaulted sky  
Did, in the placid clearness of the night,  
Disclose, had accusations to prefer  
Against my peace. Within the cabin stood  
That volume as a compass for the soul  
Revered among the nations. I implored  
Its guidance ; but the infallible support  
Of faith was wanting. Tell me, why refused  
To one by storms annoy’d and adverse winds,  
Perplex’d with currents, of his weakness sick,  
Of vain endeavours tired, and by his own,  
And by his nature’s ignorance dismay’d.

“ Long-wish’d-for sight, the Western world appear’d ;



And, when the ship was moor'd, I leap'd ashore  
Indignantly — resolved to be a man,  
Who, having o'er the past no power, would live  
No longer in subjection to the past,  
With abject mind — from a tyrannic lord  
Inviting penance, fruitlessly endured :  
So like a fugitive whose feet have clear'd  
Some bound'ry which his followers may not cross  
In prosecution of their deadly chase,  
Respiring I look'd round. How bright the sun,  
How promising the breeze ! Can aught produced  
In the old world compare, thought I, for power  
And majesty, with this gigantic stream  
Sprung from the desert ? And behold, a city  
Fresh, youthful, and aspiring ! What are these  
To me, or I to them ? As much at least  
As he desires that they should be, whom winds  
And waves have wafted to this distant shore,  
In the condition of a damaged seed  
Whose fibres cannot, if they would, take root.  
Here may I roam at large ; my business is,  
Roaming at large, t' observe, and not to feel ;  
And therefore not to act — convinced that all  
Which bears the name of action, howsoe'er  
Beginning, ends in servitude — still painful,  
And mostly profitless. And, sooth to say,  
On nearer view, a motley spectacle  
Appear'd, of high pretensions — unproved  
But by the obstreperous voice of higher still ;  
Big passions strutting on a petty stage ;  
Which a detach'd spectator may regard  
Not unamused. But ridicule demands  
Quick change of objects ; and, to laugh alone,  
In woods and wilds, or any lonely place,  
At a composing distance from the haunts  
Of strife and folly, though it be a treat  
As choice as musing leisure can bestow ;

Yet, in the very centre of the crowd,  
To keep the secret of a poignant scorn,  
May suit an airy demon ; but, of all  
Unsocial courses, 'tis the one least fit  
For the gross spirit of mankind — the one  
That soonest fails to please, and quickliest turns  
Into vexation. Let us, then, I said,  
Leave this unknit Republic to the scourge  
Of its own passions ; and to regions haste,  
Whose shades have never felt th' encroaching axe,  
Or soil endured a transfer in the mart  
Of dire rapacity. There, man abides,  
Primeval Nature's child. A creature weak  
In combination, (wherefore else driven back  
So far, and of his old inheritance  
So easily deprived) ? but, for that cause,  
More dignified, and stronger in himself,  
Whether to act, judge, suffer, or enjoy.  
True, the intelligence of social art  
Hath overpower'd his forefathers, and soon  
Will sweep the remnant of his line away :  
But contemplations, worthier, nobler far  
Than her destructive energies, attend  
His independence, when along the side  
Of Mississippi, or that northern stream  
Which spreads into successive seas, he walks ;  
Pleased to perceive his own unshackled life,  
And his innate capacities of soul,  
There imaged : or, when having gain'd the top  
Of some commanding eminence, which yet  
Intruder ne'er beheld, he thence surveys  
Regions of wood and wide savanna, vast  
Expanse of unappropriated earth,  
With mind that sheds a light on what he sees ;  
Free as the sun, and lonely as the sun  
Pouring, above his head, its radiance down  
Upon a living and rejoicing world !

“ So, westward, tow’rd the unviolated woods,  
I bent my way ; and, roaming far and wide,  
Fail’d not to greet the merry mocking-bird ;  
And while the melancholy muccawiss  
(The sportive bird’s companion in the grove)  
Repeated o’er and o’er his plaintive cry,  
I sympathized at leisure with the sound ;  
But that pure archetype of human greatness,  
I found him not. There, in his stead, appear’d  
A creature, squalid, vengeful, and impure ;  
Remorseless, and submissive to no law  
But superstitious fear, and abject sloth.  
Enough is told ! Here am I — ye have heard  
What evidence I seek, and vainly seek ;  
What from my fellow-beings I require,  
And cannot find ; what I myself have lost,  
Nor can regain : how languidly I look  
Upon this visible fabric of the world,  
May be divined — perhaps it hath been said.  
But spare your pity, if there be in me  
Aught that deserves respect : for I exist —  
Within myself — not comfortless. The tenor  
Which my life holds, he readily may conceive  
Whoe’er hath stood to watch a mountain brook  
In some still passage of its course, and seen  
Within the depths of its capacious breast  
Inverted trees, and rocks, and azure sky ;  
And, on its glassy surface, specks of foam  
And conglobated bubbles undissolved,  
Numerous as stars ; that, by their ownward lapse,  
Betray to sight the motion of the stream,  
Else imperceptible ; meanwhile is heard  
Perchance a roar or murmur ; and the sound  
Though soothing, and the little floating isles  
Though beautiful, are both by Nature charged  
With the same pensive office ; and make known  
Through what perplexing labyrinths, abrupt

Precipitations, and untoward straits,  
 The earth-born wanderer hath pass'd ; and quickly,  
 That respite o'er, like traverses and toils  
 Must be again encounter'd. Such a stream  
 Is human life ; and so the spirit fares  
 In the best quiet to its course allow'd :  
 And such is mine — save only for a hope  
 That my particular current soon will reach  
 Th' unfathomable gulf where all is still !”

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## BOOK IV.

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### DESPONDENCY CORRECTED.

State of feeling produced by the foregoing narrative — A belief in a superintending Providence the only adequate support under affliction — Wanderer's ejaculation to the Supreme Being — Account of his own devotional feelings in youth involved in it — Implores that he may retain in age the power to find repose among enduring and eternal things — What these latter are — Acknowledges the difficulty of a lively faith — Hence immoderate sorrow — But doubt or despondency not therefore to be inferred — And proceeds to administer consolation to the Solitary — Exhortations — How these are received — Wanderer resumes — And applies his discourse to that other cause of dejection in the Solitary's mind, the disappointment of his expectations from the French Revolution — States the rational grounds of hope — And insists on the necessity of patience and fortitude with respect to the course of the great revolutions of the world — Knowledge the source of tranquillity — Rural life and solitude particularly favourable to a knowledge of the inferior creatures — Study of their habits and ways recommended as exerting a beneficial influence on the affections and the imagination — Exhortation to bodily exertion and an active communion with Nature — Morbid solitude a pitiable thing — If the elevated imagination cannot be exerted, try the

humbler fancy—Superstition better than apathy—Apathy and destitution unknown in the infancy of society—The various modes of Religion prevented it—This illustrated in the Jewish, Persian, Babylonian, Chaldean, and Grecian modes of belief—Solitary interposes—Wanderer, in answer, points out the influence of religious and imaginative feeling on the mind in the humble ranks of society, in rural life especially—This illustrated from present and past times—Observation that these principles tend to recall exploded superstitions and popery—Wanderer rebuts this charge and contrasts the dignities of the imagination with the presumptive littleness of certain modern philosophers, whom the Solitary appears to esteem—Recommends to him other lights and guides—Asserts the power of the soul to regenerate herself—Solitary agitated, and asks how—Reply—Personal appeal—Happy for us that the imagination and affections, in our own despite, mitigate the evils of that state of intellectual slavery which the calculating understanding is so apt to produce—Exhortation to activity of body renewed—How Nature is to be communed with—Wanderer concludes with a prospect of a legitimate union of the imagination, the affections, the understanding, and the reason—Effect of the Wanderer's discourse—Evening—Return to the Cottage.

HERE closed the tenant of that lonely vale  
 His mournful narrative, commenced in pain,  
 In pain commenced, and ended without peace;  
 Yet temper'd, not unfrequently, with strains  
 Of native feeling grateful to our minds,  
 And doubtless yielding some relief to his,  
 While we sate listening with compassion due.  
 Such pity yet surviving, with firm voice,  
 That did not falter, though the heart was moved,  
 The Wanderer said:—

“One adequate support

For the calamities of mortal life  
 Exists—one only—an assured belief  
 That the procession of our fate, howe'er  
 Sad or disturb'd, is order'd by a Being  
 Of infinite benevolence and power,  
 Whose everlasting purposes embrace



All accidents, converting them to good.  
The darts of anguish *fix* not where the seat  
Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified  
By acquiescence in the Will supreme  
For time and for eternity—by faith,  
Faith absolute in God, including hope,  
And the defence that lies in boundless love  
Of His perfections ; with habitual dread  
Of aught unworthily conceived, endured  
Impatiently, ill-done, or left undone  
To the dishonour of His holy name.  
Soul of our souls, and Safeguard of the world,  
Sustain, Thou only canst, the sick of heart !  
Restore their languid spirits, and recall  
Their lost affections unto Thee and thine !”

Then, as we issued from that covert nook,  
He thus continued, lifting up his eyes  
To heaven : — “ How beautiful this dome of sky,  
And the vast hills, in fluctuation fix’d  
At Thy command, how awful ! Shall the soul,  
Human and rational, report of Thee,  
Even less than these ? Be mute who will, who can,  
Yet I will praise Thee with impassion’d voice :  
My lips, that may forget Thee in the crowd,  
Cannot forget Thee here, where Thou hast built  
For Thy own glory in the wilderness !  
Me didst Thou constitute a priest of thine,  
In such a temple as we now behold  
Rear’d for thy presence : therefore am I bound  
To worship, here and everywhere, as one  
Not doom’d to ignorance, though forced to tread,  
From childhood up, the ways of poverty ;  
From unreflecting ignorance preserved,  
And from debasement rescued. By thy grace  
The particle divine remain’d unquench’d ;  
And, ’mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,

Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,  
 From paradise transplanted. Wintry age  
 Impends ; the frost will gather round my heart,  
 And if they wither I am worse than dead !  
 Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires  
 Perpetual sabbath — come, disease and want,  
 And sad exclusion through decay of sense —  
 But leave me unabated trust in Thee —  
 And let Thy favour, to the end of life,  
 Inspire me with ability to seek  
 Repose and hope among eternal things,  
 Father of heaven and earth ! — and I am rich,  
 And will possess my portion in content ! ”

“ And what are things eternal ? — Powers depart,”  
 The gray-hair’d Wand’rer steadfastly replied,  
 Answering the question which himself had asked,  
 “ Possessions vanish, and opinions change,  
 And passions hold a fluctuating seat ;  
 But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,  
 And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,  
 Duty exists ; immutably survive,  
 For our support, the measures and the forms  
 Which an abstract intelligence supplies ;  
 Whose kingdom is where time and space are not.  
 Of other converse, which mind, soul, and heart  
 Do, with united urgency, require,  
 What more, that may not perish ? Thou, dread Source,  
 Prime, self-existing Cause and End of all  
 That, in the scale of being fill their place,  
 Above our human region, or below,  
 Set and sustain’d — Thou, who didst wrap the cloud  
 Of infancy around us, that Thyself,  
 Therein, with our simplicity a while,  
 Mightst hold, on earth, communion undisturb’d —  
 Who, from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,  
 Or from its death-like void, with punctual care,

And touch as gentle as the morning light,  
Restor'st us daily to the powers of sense,  
And reason's steadfast rule — Thou, Thou alone  
Art everlasting, and the blessèd spirits,  
Which Thou includest, as the sea her waves.  
For adoration Thou endurest ; endure  
For consciousness the motions of Thy will ;  
For apprehension those transcendent truths  
Of the pure intellect, that stand as laws  
(Submission constituting strength and power)  
Even to Thy Being's infinite majesty !  
This universe shall pass away—a frame  
Glorious, because the shadow of thy might !  
A step, or link, for intercourse with Thee.  
Ah ! if the time must come, in which my feet  
No more shall stray where meditation leads  
By flowing stream, through wood, or craggy wild,  
Loved haunts like these — the unimprison'd mind  
May yet have scope to range among her own,  
Her thoughts, her images, her high desires.  
If the dear faculty of sight should fail,  
Still it may be allow'd me to remember  
What visionary powers of eye and soul  
In youth were mine ; when, station'd on the top  
Of some huge hill, expectant, I beheld  
The sun rise up, from distant climes return'd  
Darkness to chase, and sleep, and bring the day,  
His bounteous gift ! — or saw him towards the deep  
Sink, with a retinue of flaming clouds  
Attended ; then my spirit was entranced  
With joy exalted to beatitude ;  
The measure of my soul was fill'd with bliss  
And holiest love ; as earth, sea, air, with light,  
With pomp, with glory, with magnificence !

“ Those fervent raptures are for ever flown,  
And, since their date, my soul hath undergone

Change manifold, for better or for worse ;  
Yet cease I not to struggle and t' aspire  
Heavenward, and chide the part of me that flags  
Through sinful choice, or dread necessity  
On human nature, from above, imposed.  
'Tis, by comparison, an easy task  
Earth to despise ; but, to converse with Heaven —  
This is not easy. To relinquish all  
We have, or hope, of happiness and joy,  
And stand in freedom loosen'd from this world,  
I deem not arduous ; but must needs confess,  
That 'tis a thing impossible to frame  
Conceptions equal to the soul's desires,  
And the most difficult of tasks to *keep*  
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.  
Man is of dust : ethereal hopes are his,  
Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,  
Want due consistence ; like a pillar of smoke  
That with majestic energy from earth  
Rises, but, having reach'd the thinner air,  
Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.  
From this infirmity of mortal kind  
Sorrow proceeds, which else were not ; at least,  
If grief be something hallow'd and ordain'd,  
If, in proportion, it be just and meet,  
Through this, 'tis able to maintain its hold  
In that excess which conscience disapproves.  
For who could sink and settle to that point  
Of selfishness ; so senseless who could be  
In framing estimates of loss and gain,  
As long and perseveringly to mourn  
For any object of his love, removed  
From this unstable world, if he could fix  
A satisfying view upon that state  
Of pure, imperishable blessedness,  
Which reason promises, and Holy Writ  
Insures to all believers ? Yet mistrust

Is of such incapacity, methinks,  
No natural branch ; despondency far less.  
And, if there be whose tender frames have droop'd  
Even to the dust, apparently through weight  
Of anguish unrelev'd, and lack of power,  
An agonizing sorrow to transmute,  
Infer not hence a hope from those withheld  
When wanted most ; a confidence impair'd  
So pitiably, that, having ceased to see  
With bodily eyes, they are borne down by love  
Of what is lost, and perish through regret.  
Oh, no ! full oft the innocent sufferer sees  
Too clearly, feels too vividly, and longs  
To realize the vision with intense  
And over-constant yearning : there, there lies  
The excess, by which the balance is destroy'd.  
Too, too contracted are these walls of flesh,  
This vital warmth too cold, these visual orbs,  
Though inconceivably endow'd, too dim  
For any passion of the soul that leads  
To ecstasy, and, all the crooked paths  
Of time and change disdaining, takes its course  
Along the line of limitless desires.  
I, speaking now from such disorder free —  
Nor sleep, nor craving, but in settled peace —  
I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore  
Are glorified ; or, if they sleep, shall wake  
From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.  
Hope, below this, consists not with belief  
In mercy, carried infinite degrees  
Beyond the tenderness of human hearts ;  
Hope, below this, consists not with belief  
In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,  
That finds no limits but its own pure will.

“ Here, then, we rest, not fearing to be left  
In undisturb'd possession of our creed,



For aught that human reasoning can achieve  
To unsettle or perplex us ; yet with pain  
Acknowledging, and grievous self-reproach,  
That, though immovably convinced, we want  
Zeal, and the virtue to exist by faith,  
As soldiers live by courage ; as, by strength  
Of heart, the sailor fights with roaring seas.  
Alas ! the endowment of immortal power  
Is match'd unequally with custom, time,  
And domineering faculties of sense,  
In *all* ; in most, with superadded foes,  
Idle temptations, open vanities  
Of dissipation ; countless, still renew'd,  
Ephemeral offspring of the unblushing world :  
And, in the private regions of the mind,  
Ill-govern'd passions, ranklings of despite,  
Immoderate wishes, pining discontent,  
Distress and care. What then remains ? To seek  
Those helps, for his occasions ever near,  
Who lacks not will to use them ; vows, renew'd  
On the first motion of a holy thought ;  
Vigils of contemplation ; praise, and prayer, —  
A stream which from the fountain of the heart,  
Issuing, however feebly, nowhere flows  
Without access of unexpected strength.  
But, above all, the victory is most sure  
For him who, seeking faith by virtue, strives  
To yield entire submission to the law  
Of conscience, — conscience revered and obey'd  
As God's most intimate prescence in the soul,  
And His most perfect image in the world.  
Endeavour thus to live ; these rules regard ;  
These helps solicit ; and a steadfast seat  
Shall then be yours among the happy few  
Who dwell on earth, yet breathe empyreal air,  
Sons of the morning. For your nobler part,  
Ere disencumber'd of her mortal chains,

Doubt shall be quell'd and trouble chased away,  
With only such degree of sadness left  
As may support longings of pure desire,  
And strengthen love, rejoicing secretly  
In the sublime attractions of the grave."

While, in this strain, the venerable sage  
Pour'd forth his aspirations, and announced  
His judgments, near that lonely house we paced  
A plot of green sward, seemingly preserved  
By Nature's care from wreck of scatter'd stones,  
And from the encroachment of encircling heath.  
Small space ; but, for reiterated steps,  
Smooth and commodious ; as a stately deck  
Which to and fro the mariner is used  
To tread for pastime, talking with his mates,  
Or haply thinking of far-distant friends,  
While the ship glides before a steady breeze.  
Stillness prevail'd around us ; and the voice  
That spake was capable to lift the soul  
Towards regions yet more tranquil. But, methought  
That he, whose fix'd despondency had given  
Impulse and motive to that strong discourse,  
Was less upraised in spirit than abash'd ;  
Shrinking from admonition, like a man  
Who feels that to exhort is to reproach.  
Yet, not to be diverted from his aim,  
The sage continued : — " For that other loss,  
The loss of confidence in social man,  
By the unexpected transports of our age  
Carried so high, that every thought which look'd  
Beyond the temporal destiny of the kind,  
To many seem'd superfluous, as no cause  
For such exalted confidence could e'er  
Exist ; so, none is now for such despair :  
The two extremes are equally remote  
From truth and reason ; do not, then, confound

One with the other, but reject them both,  
And choose the middle point, whereon to build  
Sound expectations. This doth he advise  
Who shared at first the illusion ; but was soon  
Cast from the pedestal of pride by shocks  
Which Nature gently gave in woods and fields ;  
Nor unreprieved by Providence, thus speaking  
To the inattentive children of the world : —  
' Vain-glorious generation ! what new powers  
On you have been conferr'd — what gifts, withheld  
From your progenitors, have ye received,  
Fit recompence of new desert — what claim  
Are ye prepared to urge, that my decrees  
For you should undergo a sudden change ;  
And the weak functions of one busy day,  
Reclaiming and extirpating, perform  
What all the slowly-moving years of time,  
With their united force, have left undone ?  
By nature's gradual processes be taught,  
By story be confounded. Ye aspire  
Rashly, to fall once more ; and that false fruit,  
Which, to your overweening spirits, yields  
Hope of a flight celestial, will produce  
Misery and shame. But wisdom of her sons  
Shall not the less, though late, be justified.

" Such timely warning," said the Wanderer, " gave  
That visionary voice ; and, at this day,  
When a Tartarean darkness overspreads  
The groaning nations ; when the impious rule,  
By will or by establish'd ordinance,  
Their own dire agents, and constrain the good  
To acts which they abhor ; though I bewail  
This triumph, yet the pity of my heart  
Prevents me not from owning that the law  
By which mankind now suffers, is most just.  
For by superior energies, more strict

Affiance in each other, faith more firm  
 In their unhallow'd principles, the bad  
 Have fairly earn'd a victory o'er the weak,  
 The vacillating, inconsistent good.  
 Therefore, not unconsoled, I wait — in hope  
 To see the moment when the righteous cause  
 Shall gain defenders zealous and devout  
 As they who have opposed her ; in which Virtue  
 Will to her efforts tolerate no bounds  
 That are not lofty as her rights ; aspiring  
 By impulse of her own ethereal zeal.  
 That spirit only can redeem mankind :  
 And when that sacred spirit shall appear,  
 Then shall *our* triumph be complete as theirs.  
 Yet, should this confidence prove vain, the wise  
 Have still the keeping of their proper peace,  
 Are guardians of their own tranquility.  
 They act or they recede, observe and feel,  
 ' Knowing ' ( to adopt the energetic words  
 Which a time-hallow'd poet hath employ'd)  
 ' Knowing the heart of man is set to be  
 The centre of this world, about the which  
 Those revolutions of disturbances  
 Still roll ; where all th' aspects of misery  
 Predominate ; whose strong effects are such  
 As he must bear, being powerless to redress,  
*And that unless above himself he can  
 Erect himself, how poor a thing is man !* \*

" Happy is he who lives to understand  
 Not human nature only, but explores  
 All natures, to the end that he may find  
 The law that governs each ; and where begins  
 The union, the partition where, that makes  
 Kind and degree among all visible beings ;  
 The constitutions, powers, and faculties,

\* Daniel.

Which they inherit, — cannot step beyond, —  
And cannot fall beneath ; that do assign  
To every class its station and its office,  
Through all the mighty commonwealth of things,  
Up from the creeping plant to sovereign man.  
Such converse, if directed by a meek,  
Sincere, and humble spirit, teaches love ;  
For knowledge is delight ; and such delight  
Breeds love ; yet, suited as it rather is  
To thought and to the climbing intellect,  
It teaches less to love, than to adore ;  
If that be not indeed the highest love !”

“ Yet,” said I, tempted here to interpose,  
“ The dignity of life is not impair’d  
By aught that innocently satisfies  
The humbler cravings of the heart ; and he  
Is a still happier man, who, for those heights  
Of speculation not unfit, descends,  
And such benign affections cultivates  
Among the inferior kinds ; not merely those  
That he may call his own, and which depend,  
As individual objects of regard,  
Upon his care ; from whom he also looks  
For signs and tokens of a mutual bond ;  
But others, far beyond this narrow sphere,  
Whom, for the very sake of love, he loves.  
Nor is it a mean phase of rural life  
And solitude, that they do favour most,  
Most frequently call forth, and best sustain  
These pure sensations ; that can penetrate  
The obstreperous city ; on the barren seas  
Are not unfelt,— and much might recommend,  
How much they might inspirit and endear,  
The loneliness of this sublime retreat !”

“ Yes,” said the sage, resuming the discourse,



Again directed to his downcast friend,  
 "If, with the froward will and grovelling soul  
 Of man offended, Liberty is here,  
 And invitation every hour renew'd,  
 To mark *their* placid state who never heard  
 Of a command which they have power to break,  
 Or rule which they are tempted to transgress :  
 These, with a soothed or elevated heart,  
 May we behold — their knowledge register —  
 Observe their ways ; and, free from envy, find  
 Complacence there : but wherefore this to you ?  
 I guess that, welcome to your lonely hearth,  
 The redbreast feeds in winter from your hand ;  
 A box perchance is from your casement hung  
 For the small wren to build in ; not in vain,  
 The barriers disregarding that surround  
 This deep abiding-place, before your sight  
 Mounts on the breeze the butterfly, and soars, \*  
 Small creature as she is, from earth's bright flowers  
 Into the dewy clouds. Ambition reigns  
 In the waste wilderness ; the soul ascends  
 Towards her native firmament of heaven,  
 When the fresh eagle, in the month of May,  
 Upborne at evening, on replenish'd wing,  
 This shady valley leaves, and leaves the dark  
 Empurpled hills, conspicuously renewing  
 A proud communication with the sun  
 Low sunk beneath the horizon. List ! — I heard,  
 From yon huge breast of rock, a solemn bleat,  
 Sent forth as if it were the mountain's voice,  
 As if the visible mountain made the cry,

\* P. Commire, a pleasing writer of Latin verse, says of the flight of a butterfly,

"*Florem putares nare per liquidam æthera.*"

"It flies, and seems a flower that floats in air !"

— *Curiosities of Literature.*

Again !” The effect upon the soul was such  
As he express’d : for, from the mountain’s heart  
The solemn bleat appear’d to come ; there was  
No other — and the region all around  
Stood silent, empty of all shape of life.  
It was a lamb, left somewhere to itself,  
The plaintive spirit of the solitude !  
He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,  
Through consciousness that silence in such place  
Was best, — the most affecting eloquence.  
But soon his thoughts return’d upon themselves,  
And, in soft tone of speech, he thus resumed : —

“ Ah ! if the heart, too confidently raised,  
Perchance too lightly occupied, or lull’d  
Too easily, despise or overlook  
The vassalage that binds her to the earth,  
Her sad dependence upon time, and all  
The trepidations of mortality,  
What place so destitute and void but there  
The little flower her vanity shall check ;  
The trailing worm reprove her thoughtless pride ?

“ These craggy regions, these chaotic wilds,  
Does that benignity pervade, that warms  
The mole contented with her darksome walk  
In the cold ground ; and to the emmet gives  
Her foresight, and the intelligence that makes  
The tiny creatures strong by social league ;  
Supports the generations, multiplies  
Their tribes till we behold a spacious plain  
Or grassy bottom, all with little hills —  
Their labour — cover’d, as a lake with waves ;  
Thousands of cities, in the desert place  
Built up of life, and food, and means of life !  
Nor wanting here, to entertain the thought,  
Creatures that in communities exist,

Less, as might seem, for general guardianship,  
Or through dependence upon mutual aid,  
Than by participation of delight  
And a strict love of fellowship, combined.  
What other spirit can it be that prompts  
The gilded summer flies to mix and weave  
Their sports together in the solar beam,  
Or in the gloom of twilight hum their joy?  
More obviously the self-same influence rules  
The feather'd kinds; the fieldfare's pensive flocks,  
The cawing rooks, and sea-mews from afar,  
Hovering above these inland solitudes,  
Unscatter'd by the wind, at whose loud call  
Their voyage was begun: nor is its power  
Unfelt among the sedentary fowl  
That seek yon pool, and there prolong their stay  
In silent congress; or together roused  
Take flight; while with their clang the air resounds,  
And, over all, in that ethereal arch,  
Is the mute company of changeful clouds;  
Bright apparition suddenly put forth,  
The rainbow, smiling on the faded storm;  
The mild assemblage of the starry heavens;  
And the great sun, earth's universal lord!

“How bountiful is Nature! he shall find  
Who seeks not; and to him who hath not ask'd  
Large measure shall be dealt. Three Sabbath-days  
Are scarcely told, since, on a service bent  
Of mere humanity, you clomb those heights;  
And what a marvellous and heavenly show  
Was to your sight reveal'd! — the swains moved on,  
And heeded not: you linger'd, and perceived.  
There is a luxury in self-dispraise;  
And inward self-disparagement affords  
To meditative spleen a grateful feast.  
Trust me, pronouncing on your own desert,

^ You judge thankfully ; distemper'd nerves  
 Infect the thoughts ; the languor of the frame  
 Depresses the soul's vigour. Quit your couch —  
 Cleave not so fondly to your moody cell ;  
 Nor let the hallow'd powers that shed from heaven  
 Stillness and rest, with disapproving eye  
 Look down upon your taper, through a watch  
 Of midnight hours, unseasonably twinkling  
 In this deep hollow ; like a sullen star  
 Dimly reflected in a lonely pool.  
 Take courage, and withdraw yourself from ways  
 That run not parallel to Nature's course.  
 Rise with the lark ! your matins shall obtain  
 Grace, be their composition what it may,  
 If but with hers perform'd ; climb once again,  
 Climb every day, those ramparts ; meet the breeze  
 Upon their tops, — adventurous as a bee  
 That from your garden thither soars, to feed  
 On new-blown heath ; let yon commanding rock  
 Be your frequented watch-tower ; roll the stone  
 In thunder down the mountains : with all your might  
 Chase the wild goat ; and, if the bold red deer  
 Fly to these harbours, driven by hound and horn  
 Loud echoing, add your speed to the pursuit ;  
 So, wearied to your hut shall you return,  
 And sink at evening into sound repose."

The Solitary lifted towards the hills  
 An animated eye ; and thoughts were mine  
 Which this ejaculation clothed in words : —  
 " Oh ! what a joy it were, in vigorous health,  
 To have a body, (this our vital frame  
 With shrinking sensibility endued,  
 And all the nice regards of flesh and blood),  
 And to the elements surrender it  
 As if it were a spirit ! — How divine,  
 The liberty, for frail, for mortal man,

To roam at large among unpeopled glens  
And mountainous retirements, only trod  
By devious footsteps ; regions consecrate  
To oldest time ! and, reckless of the storm  
That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,  
Be as a presence or a motion — one  
Among the many there ; and, while the mists  
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes  
And phantoms from the crags and solid earth  
As fast as a musician scatters sounds  
Out of an instrument ; and, while the streams  
(As at a first creation and in haste  
To exercise their untried faculties)  
Descending from the region of the clouds  
And starting from the hollows of the earth  
More multitudinous every moment, rend  
Their way before them, what a joy to roam  
An equal among mightiest energies ;  
And haply sometimes with articulate voice,  
Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard  
By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,  
‘ Be this continued so from day to day,  
Nor let it have an end from month to month ! ’ ”

“ Yes,” said the Wanderer, taking from my lips  
The strain of transport, “ whosoe’er in youth  
Has, through ambition of his soul, given way  
To such desires, and grasp’d at such delight,  
Shall feel the stirrings of them late and long ;  
In spite of all the weakness that life brings,  
Its cares and sorrows ; he, though taught to own  
The tranquilising power of time, shall wake—  
Wake sometimes to a noble restlessness—  
Loving the spots which once he gloried in.

“ Compatriot—friend ! remote are Garry’s hills,  
The streams far distant of your native glen ;



Yet is their form and image here express'd  
As by a duplicate — at least set forth  
With brotherly resemblance. Turn your steps  
Wherever fancy leads ; by day, by night,  
Are various engines working, not the same  
As those by which your soul in youth was moved,  
But by the great Artificer endued  
With no inferior power. You dwell alone ;  
You walk, you live, you speculate alone ;  
Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,  
For you a stately gallery maintain  
Of gay or tragic pictures. You have seen,  
Have acted, suffer'd, travell'd far, observed  
With no incurious eye ; and books are yours,  
Within whose silent chamber treasure lies  
Preserved from age to age ; more precious far  
Than that accumulated store of gold  
And orient gems, which, for a day of need,  
The sultan hides within ancestral tombs ;  
These hoards of truth you can unlock at will :  
And music waits upon your skilful touch,—  
Sounds which the wandering shepherd from these  
heights  
Hears, and forgets his purpose. Furnish'd thus,  
How can you droop, if willing to be raised ?

“ A piteous lot it were to flee from man —  
Yet not rejoice in nature. He, whose hours  
Are by domestic pleasures uncaress'd  
And unenliven'd ; who exists whole years  
Apart from benefits received or done  
'Mid the transactions of the bustling crowd ;  
Who neither hears, nor feels a wish to hear,  
Of the world's interests — such a one hath need  
Of a quick fancy and an active heart,  
That for a day's consumption books may yield  
A not unwholesome food, and earth and air

Supply his morbid humour with delight.  
Truth has her pleasure-grounds, her haunts of ease  
And easy contemplation — gay parterres,  
And labyrinthine walks, her sunny glades  
And shady groves, for recreation framed :  
These may he range, if willing to partake  
Their soft indulgences, and in due time  
May issue thence, recruited for the tasks  
And course of service Truth requires from those  
Who tend her altars, wait upon her throne,  
And guard her fortresses. Who thinks, and feels,  
And recognises ever and anon  
The breeze of Nature stirring in his soul,  
Why need such man go desperately astray,  
And nurse ‘the dreadful appetite of death?’  
If tired with systems, each in its degree  
Substantial, and all crumbling in their turn,  
Let him build systems of his own, and smile  
At the fond work — demolish’d with a touch ;  
If unreligious, let him be at once,  
Among ten thousand innocents, enroll’d  
A pupil in the many-chamber’d school,  
Where superstition weaves her airy dreams.

“Life’s autumn past I stand on winter’s verge,  
And daily lose what I desire to keep  
Yet rather would I instantly decline  
To the traditionary sympathies  
Of a most rustic ignorance, and take  
A fearful apprehension from the owl  
Or death-watch, and as readily rejoice,  
If two auspicious magpies cross’d my way ;  
This rather would I do than see and hear  
The repetitions wearisome of sense,  
Where soul is dead, and feeling hath no place ;  
Where knowledge, ill begun in cold remark  
On outward things, with formal inference ends,

Or, if the mind turn inward, 'tis perplex'd,  
 Lost in a gloom of uninspired research :  
 Meanwhile, the heart within the heart, the seat  
 Where peace and happy consciousness should dwell  
 On its own axis restlessly revolves,  
 Yet nowhere finds the cheering light of truth.

✓ “ Upon the breast of new-created earth  
 Man walk'd ; and when or wheresoe'er he moved,  
 Alone or mated, solitude was not.  
 He heard, upon the wind, the articulate voice  
 Of God ; and angels to his sight appear'd,  
 Crowning the glorious hills of paradise,  
 Or through the groves gliding like morning mist  
 Enkindled by the sun. He sate, and talk'd  
 With wingèd messengers, who daily brought  
 To his small island in th' ethereal deep,  
 Tidings of joy and love. From these pure heights  
 (Whether of actual vision, sensible  
 To sight and feeling, or that in this sort  
 Have condescendingly been shadow'd forth  
 Communications spiritually maintain'd,  
 And intuitions moral and divine)  
 Fell human kind — to banishment condemn'd,  
 That flowing years repeal'd not, and distress,  
 And grief spread wide ; but man escaped the doom  
 Of destitution — solitude was not.  
 Jehovah — shapeless Power above all powers,  
 Single and one, the omnipresent God,  
 By vocal utterance, or blaze of light,  
 Or cloud of darkness, localized in heaven —  
 On earth, enshrined within the wandering ark,  
 Or, out of Sion, thundering from his throne  
 Between the Cherubim — on the chosen race  
 Shower'd miracles, and ceased not to dispense  
 Judgements that fill'd the land from age to age  
 With hope, and love, and gratitude, and fear,

And with amazement smote — thereby to assert  
His scorn'd, or unacknowledged sovereignty.  
And when the One, ineffable of name,  
In nature indivisible, withdrew  
From mortal adoration or regard,  
Not then was Diety engulf'd, nor man,  
The rational creature, left to feel the weight  
Of his own reason, without sense or thought  
Of higher reason, and a purer will  
To benefit and bless, through mightier power.  
Whether the Persian, zealous to reject  
Altar and image, and the inclusive walls  
And roofs of temples built by human hands,  
The loftiest heights ascending, from their tops,  
With myrtle-wreath'd tiara on his brows,  
Presented sacrifice to moon and stars,  
And to the winds and mother elements,  
And the whole circle of the heavens, for him  
A sensitive existence, and a God  
With lifted hands invoked and songs of praise.  
Or, less reluctantly to bonds of sense  
Yielding his soul, the Babylonian framed  
For influence undefined a personal shape ;  
And, from the plain, with toil immense, uprear'd  
Tower eight times planted on the top of tower,  
That Belus, nightly to his splendid couch  
Descending, there might rest ; and, from that height,  
Pure and serene, the godhead overlook  
Winding Euphrates, and the city vast  
Of his devoted worshippers, far stretch'd,  
With grove, and field, and garden interspersed ;  
Their town, and foodful region for support  
Against the pressure of beleagu'ring war.

“ Chaldean shepherds, ranging trackless fields,  
Beneath the concave of unclouded skies  
Spread like a sea, in boundless solitude,

Look'd on the polar star, as on a guide  
And guardian of their course, that never closed  
His steadfast eye. The planetary five  
With a submissive reverence they beheld ;  
Watch'd, from the centre of their sleeping flocks,  
Those radiant Mercuries, that seem'd to move  
Carrying through ether, in perpetual round,  
Decrees and resolutions of the gods ;  
And, by their aspects, signifying works  
Of dim futurity, to man reveal'd.  
The imaginative faculty was lord  
Of observations natural ; and, thus  
Led on, those shepherds made report of stars  
In set rotation passing to and fro,  
Between the orbs of our apparent sphere  
And its invisible counterpart, adorn'd  
With answering constellations, under earth,  
Removed from all approach of living sight,  
But present to the dead, who, so they deem'd,  
Like those celestial messengers, beheld  
All accidents, and judges were of all.

✓ “The lively Grecian, in a land of hills,  
Rivers, and fertile plains, and sounding shores,  
Under a cope of variegated sky,  
Could find commodious place for every god,  
Promptly received, as prodigally brought,  
From the surrounding countries, at the choice  
Of all adventurers. With unrivall'd skill,  
As nicest observations furnish'd hints  
For studious fancy, did his hand bestow  
On fluent operations a fix'd shape ;  
Metal or stone, idolatrously served.  
And yet, triumphant o'er this pompous shew  
Of art, this palpable array of sense,  
On every side encounter'd ; in despite  
Of the gross fictions chanted in the streets



By wandering rhapsodists ; and in contempt  
Of doubt and bold denials hourly urged  
Amid the wrangling schools — a ‘spirit’ hung,  
Beautiful region ! o’er thy towns and farms,  
Statues and temples, and memorial tombs ;  
And emanations were perceived, and acts  
Of immortality, in Nature’s course,  
Exemplified by mysteries that were felt  
As bonds, on grave philosopher imposed  
And armèd warrior ; and in every grove  
A gay or pensive tenderness prevail’d,  
When piety more awful had relax’d.  
‘Take, running river, take these locks of mine,’ —  
Thus would the votary say, — ‘this sever’d hair,  
My vow fulfilling, do I here present,  
Thankful for my belovèd child’s return.  
Thy banks, Cephisus, he again hath trod,  
Thy murmurs heard, and drunk the crystal lymph  
With which thou dost refresh the thirsty lip,  
And moisten all day long those flowery fields.’  
And doubtless, sometimes, when the hair was shed  
Upon the flowing stream, a thought arose  
Of life continuous — being unimpair’d —  
That hath been, is, and where it was and is,  
There shall be — seen, and heard, and felt, and known,  
And recognised, — existence unexposed  
To the blind walk of mortal accident ;  
From diminution safe and weakening age ;  
While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays,  
And countless generations of mankind  
Depart, and leave no vestige where they trod.

“ We live by admiration, hope, and love ;  
And, even as these are well and wisely fix’d,  
In dignity of being we ascend.  
But what is error ;” “ Answer he who can !”  
The sceptic somewhat haughtily exclaim’d ;

“Love, hope, and admiration — are they not  
Mad fancy’s favourite vassals? Does not life  
Use them, full oft, as pioneers to ruin,  
Guides to destruction? Is it well to trust  
Imagination’s light when Reason’s fails,  
Th’ unguarded taper where the guarded faints?  
Stoop from those heights, and soberly declare  
What error is; and, of our errors, which  
Doth most debase the mind! the genuine seats  
Of power, where are they? Who shall regulate,  
With truth, the scale of intellectual rank?”

“Methinks,” persuasively the sage replied,  
“That for this arduous office you possess  
Some rare advantages. Your early days  
A grateful recollection must supply  
Of much exalted good that may attend  
Upon the very humblest state. Your voice  
Hath in my hearing often testified  
That poor men’s children, they, and they alone,  
By their condition taught, can understand  
The wisdom of the prayer that daily asks  
For daily bread. A consciousness is yours  
How feelingly religion may be learn’d  
In smoky cabins, from a mother’s tongue —  
Heard while the dwelling vibrates to the din  
Of the contiguous torrent, gathering strength  
At every moment, — and, with strength, increase  
Of fury; or while snow is at the door,  
Assaulting and defending, and the wind,  
A sightless labourer, whistles at his work —  
Fearful, but resignation tempers fear,  
And piety is sweet to infant minds.  
The shepherd lad, who in the sunshine carves  
On the green turf a dial, to divide  
The silent hours; and who to that report  
Can portion out his pleasures, and adapt

His round of pastoral duties, is not left  
With less intelligence for *moral* things  
Of gravest import. Early he perceives,  
Within himself, a measure and a rule,  
Which to the sun of truth he can apply,  
That shines for him, and shines for all mankind.  
Experience, daily fixing his regards  
On nature's wants, he knows how few they are,  
And where they lie, how answer'd and appeased.  
This knowledge ample recompence affords  
For manifold privations ; he refers  
His notions to this standard ; on this rock  
Rests his desires ; and hence, in after life,  
Soul-strengthening patience, and sublime content.  
Imagination — not permitted here  
To waste her powers, as in the worldling's mind,  
On fickle pleasures, and surperfluous cares,  
And trivial ostentation — is left free  
And puissant to range the solemn walks  
Of time and nature, girded by a zone  
That, while it binds, invigorates and supports.  
Acknowledge, then, that whether by the side  
Of his poor hut, or on the mountain-top,  
Or in the cultured field, a man like this  
(Take from him what you will upon the score  
Of ignorance or illusion) lives and breathes  
For noble purposes of mind : his heart  
Beats to the heroic song of ancient days ;  
His eye distinguishes ; his soul creates ;  
And those illusions which excite the scorn  
Or move the pity of unthinking minds,  
Are they not mainly outward ministers  
Of inward conscience ? With whose service charged  
They come and go, appear and disappear ;  
Diverting evil purposes, remorse  
Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief,  
Or pride of heart abating : and whene'er

For less important ends those phantoms move,  
Who would forbid them, if their presence serve,  
Among wild mountains and unpeopled heaths,  
Filling a space else vacant, to exalt  
The forms of Nature, and enlarge her powers?

✓ "Once more to distant ages of the world  
Let us revert, and place before our thoughts  
The face which rural solitude might wear  
To the unenlighten'd swains of pagan Greece.  
In that fair clime the lonely herdsman, stretch'd  
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,  
With music lull'd his indolent repose :  
And, in some fit of weariness, if he,  
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear  
A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds  
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetch'd  
Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,  
A beardless youth, who touch'd a golden lute,  
And fill'd the illumined grove with ravishment.  
The nightly hunter, lifting up his eyes  
Towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart  
Call'd on the lovely wanderer who bestow'd  
That timely light, to share his joyous sport ;  
And hence, a beaming goddess, with her nymphs,  
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove  
(Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes  
By echo multiplied from rock or cave)  
Swept in the storm of chase, as moon and stars  
Glance rapidly along the clouded heavens,  
When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked  
His thirst from rill or gushing fount, and thank'd  
The Naiad. Sunbeams upon distant hills  
Gliding apace, with shadows in their train,  
Might, with small help from fancy, be transform'd  
Into fleet Oreads, sporting visibly.  
The zephyrs fanning as they pass'd, their wings,

Lack'd not, for love, fair objects, whom they woo'd  
With gentle whisper. Wither'd boughs grotesque,  
Stripp'd of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,  
From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth  
In the low vale, or on steep mountain-side —  
And sometimes, intermix'd with stirring horns  
Of the live deer, or goat's depending beard —  
These were the lurking satyrs, a wild brood  
Of gamesome deities — or Pan himself,  
The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring god !”

No apter strain could have been chosen : I mark'd  
Its kindly influence on the yielding brow  
Of our companion gradually diffused,  
While, listening, he had paced the noiseless turf,  
Like one whose untired ear a murmuring stream  
Detains ; but tempted now to interpose,  
He with a smile exclaim'd, —

“ ’Tis well you speak

At a safe distance from our native land,  
And from the mansions where our youth was taught.  
The true descendants of those godly men  
Who swept from Scotland, in a flame of zeal,  
Shrine, altar, image, and the massy piles  
That harbour'd them, — the souls retaining yet  
? The churlish features of that after race  
Who fled to cavës, and woods, and naked rocks,  
In deadly scorn of superstitious rites,  
Or what their scruples construed to be such —  
How, think you, would they tolerate this scheme  
Of fine propensities, that tends, if urged  
Far as it might be urged, to sow afresh  
The weeds of Romish phantasy, in vain  
Uprooted ; would re-consecrate our wells  
To good Saint Fillan, and to fair Saint Anne ;  
And from long banishment recall Saint Giles,  
To watch again with tutelary love



O'er stately Edinburgh throned on crags?  
A blessèd restoration—to behold  
The patron, on the shoulders of his priests,  
Once more parading through her crowded streets,  
Now simply guarded by the sober powers  
Of science, and philosophy, and sense!"

This answer follow'd: — "You have turn'd my  
thoughts  
Upon our brave progenitors, who rose  
Against idolatry with warlike mind,  
And shrunk from vain observances, to lurk  
In caves, and woods, and under dismal rocks,  
Deprived of shelter, covering, fire, and food;  
Why? — for this very reason — that they felt,  
And did acknowledge, wheresoe'er they moved,  
A spiritual presence, oft-times misconceived:  
But still a high dependence, a divine  
Bounty and government, that fill'd their hearts  
With joy, and gratitude, and fear, and love;  
And from their fervent lips drew hymns of praise  
With which the deserts rang. Though favour'd less,  
Far less, than these, yet such, in their degree,  
Were those bewilder'd pagans of old time.  
Beyond their own poor natures and above  
They look'd; were humbly thankful for the good  
Which the warm sun solicited, and earth  
Bestow'd; were glad some, — and their moral sense  
They fortified with reverence for the gods;  
And they had hopes that overstepp'd the grave.

"Now, shall our great discoverers," he exclaim'd,  
Raising his voice triumphantly, "obtain  
From sense and reason less than these obtain'd,  
Though far misled? Shall men for whom our age  
Unbaffled powers of vision hath prepared,  
To explore the world without and world within,

Be joyless as the blind? Ambitious souls —  
Whom earth, at this late season, hath produced  
To regulate the moving spheres, and weigh  
The planets in the hollow of their hand;  
And they who rather dive than soar, whose pains  
Have solved the elements, or analysed  
The thinking principal — shall they, in fact,  
Prove a degraded race? And what avails  
Renown, if their presumption make them such?  
Oh! there is laughter at their work in heaven!  
Inquire of ancient Wisdom; go, demand  
Of mighty Nature, if 'twas ever meant  
That we should pry far off, yet be unraised:  
That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore,  
Viewing all objects unremittingly  
In disconnexion dead and spiritless;  
And still dividing, and dividing still,  
Break down all grandeur, still unsatisfied  
With the perverse attempt, while littleness  
May yet become more little; waging thus  
An impious warfare with the very life  
Of our own souls! And if indeed there be  
An all-pervading Spirit, upon whom  
Our dark foundations rest, could he design,  
Or will His rites and services permit  
That this magnificent effect of power,  
The earth we tread, the sky which we behold  
By day, and all the pomp which night reveals,  
That these — and that superior mystery  
Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,  
And the dread soul within it — should exist  
Only to be examined, ponder'd, search'd,  
Probed, vex'd, and criticised? Accuse me not  
Of arrogance, unknown wanderer as I am —  
If, having walk'd with Nature threescore years,  
And offer'd, far as frailty would allow,  
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,

I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,  
 Whom I have served, that their divinity  
 Revolts, offended, at the ways of men,  
 Sway'd by such motives, to such end employ'd ;  
 Philosophers, who, when the human soul  
 Is of a thousand faculties composed,  
 And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize  
 This soul, and the transcendent universe,  
 No more than as a mirror that reflects  
 To proud self-love her own intelligence ;  
 That one poor finite object, in the abyss  
 Of infinite being, twinkling restlessly !

“Nor higher place can be assign'd to him  
 And his compeers—the laughing sage of France.\*  
 Crown'd was he, if my memory doth not err,  
 With laurel planted upon hoary hairs,  
 In sign of conquest by his wit achieved,  
 And benefits his wisdom had conferr'd.  
 His tottering body was oppress'd with flowers ;  
 Far less becoming ornaments than those  
 With which spring often decks a mouldering tree !  
 Yet so it pleased a fond, a vain old man,  
 And a most frivolous people. Him I mean  
 Who framed, to ridicule confiding faith,

\* Voltaire. “I am tired,” he is reported to have said, “of hearing it reported that twelve men were sufficient to found Christianity. I will shew the world that *one* is sufficient to destroy it.” Yielding to the urgent entreaties of friends, he came in 1778 from Geneva to Paris ; being then in his 84th year. On visiting the theatre he was greeted by a vast assemblage after the manner of the Athenians when crowning their dramatic poets. Assembled thousands bore him back to his hotel with acclamations. In the midst of this flattering incense, his feeble voice was heard saying, “You are suffocating me with roses.” This was almost the closing *scene* of his fitful career ; he expired on May 30 of the same year, and was interred with the rites of Christian worship, a point concerning which he had expressed a strange solicitude.

This sorry legend ; which by chance we found \*  
Piled in a nook, through malice, as might seem,  
Among more innocent rubbish." Speaking thus,  
With a brief notice when, and how, and where,  
We had espied the book, he drew it forth,  
And courteously, as if the act removed  
At once all traces from the good man's heart  
Of unbenign aversion or contempt,  
Restored it to its owner. "Gentle friend"—  
Herewith he grasp'd the Solitary's hand,—  
"You have known better lights and guides than these—  
Ah ! let not aught amiss within dispose  
A noble mind to practise on herself,  
And tempt opinion to support the wrongs  
Of passion : whatsoe'er is felt or fear'd  
From higher judgment-seats—make no appeal  
To lower ! Can you question that the soul  
Inherits an allegiance, not by choice  
To be cast off, upon an oath proposed  
By each new upstart notion ? In the ports  
Of levity no refuge can be found,  
No shelter, for a spirit in distress.  
He who by wilful disesteem of life  
And proud insensibility to hope,

\* Voltaire's "Candide, or all for the best," a tale designed to throw ridicule on those views of Providence which represent all things as directly good. The refutation of Optimism in the "Candide," is both witty and triumphant. It has been observed by some one that Johnson's "Rasselas" and Voltaire's "Candide," have a striking resemblance in their general scope. Both prove the very large admixture of evil with good, in the world. The Frenchman intended by his philosophic wit to discredit religion, and by holding up to contempt one fanatical view of Providence, to destroy all faith in the doctrine. The English writer, intended, by shewing how unsatisfactory life often is, to train the hope and faith of man to eternity. As to Optimism, it secures no advantage which the doctrine of *compensation* wants, and it is open to the most dangerous moral conclusions. If "Whatever is, is right," there is no evil.

Affronts the eye of solitude, shall learn  
That her mild nature can be terrible ;  
That neither she nor silence lacks the power  
T'avenge their own insulted majesty.  
O blest seclusion ! when the mind admits  
The law of duty ; and thereby can live  
Through each vicissitude of loss and gain,  
Link'd in entire complacence with her choice ;  
When youth's presumptuousness is mellow'd down,  
And manhood's vain anxiety dismiss'd ;  
When wisdom shews her seasonable fruit,  
Upon the boughs of sheltering leisure hung  
In sober plenty ; when the spirit stoops  
To drink with gratitude the crystal stream  
Of unreprieved enjoyment ; and is pleased  
To muse, and be saluted by the air  
Of meek repentance, wafting wall-flower scents  
From out the crumbling ruins of fallen pride  
And chambers of transgression, now forlorn.  
O calm, contented days and peaceful nights !  
Who, when such good can be obtain'd, would strive  
To reconcile his manhood to a couch  
Soft, as may seem, but, under that disguise,  
Stuff'd with the thorny substance of the past,  
For fix'd annoyance ; and full oft beset  
With floating dreams, disconsolate and black,  
The vapoury phantoms of futurity ?

“ Within the soul a faculty abides,  
That with interpositions, which would hide  
And darken, so can deal, that they become  
Contingencies of pomp ; and serve to exalt  
Her native brightness. As the ample moon,  
In the deep stillness of a summer eve  
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,  
Burns like an unconsuming fire of light  
In the green trees ; and, kindling on all sides



Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil  
 Into a substance glorious as her own,  
 Yea with her own incorporated, by power  
 Capacious and serene—like power abides  
 In man's celestial spirit; Virtue thus  
 Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds  
 A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire,  
 From the encumbrances of mortal life,  
 From error, dissatisfaction—nay, from guilt;  
 And sometimes, so relenting Justice wills,  
 From palpable oppressions of despair."

The Solitary by these words was touch'd  
 With manifest emotion, and exclaim'd,  
 "But how begin—and whence?—'The mind is free—  
 Resolve," the haughty moralist would say,  
 'This single act is all that we demand.'  
 Alas! such wisdom bids a creature fly,  
 Whose very sorrow is, that time hath shorn  
 His natural wing! To friendship let him turn  
 For succour; but perhaps he sits alone  
 On stormy waters, in a little boat  
 That holds but him, and can contain no more!  
 Religion tells of amity sublime  
 Which no condition can preclude; of One  
 Who sees all suffering, comprehends all wants,  
 All weakness fathoms, can supply all needs;  
 But is that bounty absolute? His gifts,  
 Are they not still, in some degree, rewards  
 For acts of service? Can His love extend  
 To hearts that own not Him? Will showers of grace,  
 When in the sky no promise may be seen,  
 Fall to refresh a parch'd and wither'd land?  
 Or shall the groaning spirit cast her load  
 At the Redeemer's feet?"

In rueful tone,  
 With some impatience in his mien he spake;

And this reply was given : —

“ As men from men

Do in the constitution of their souls  
Differ, by mystery not to be explain'd ;  
And as we fall by various ways, and sink  
One deeper than another, self-condemn'd,  
Through manifold degrees of guilt and shame,  
So manifold and various are the ways  
Of restoration, fashion'd to the steps  
Of all infirmity, and tending all  
To the same point, — attainable by all ;  
Peace in ourselves, and union with our God.  
For him to whom I speak an easy road  
Lies open : we have heard from you a voice  
At every moment soften'd in its course  
By tenderness of heart ; have seen your eye,  
Even like an altar lit by fire from heaven,  
Kindle before us. Your discourse this day,  
That, like the fabled Lethe, wish'd to flow  
In creeping sadness, through oblivious shades  
Of death and night, has caught at every turn  
The colours of the sun. Access for you  
Is yet preserved to principles of truth,  
Which the imaginative will upholds  
In seats of wisdom, not to be approach'd  
By the inferior faculty that moulds,  
With her minute and speculative pains,  
Opinion, ever changing. I have seen  
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract  
Of inland ground, applying to his ear  
The convolutions of a smooth-lipp'd shell ;  
To which, in silence hush'd, his very soul  
Listen'd intensely ; and his countenance soon  
Brighten'd with joy ; for murmurings from within  
Were heard, — sonorous cadences ! whereby,  
To his belief, the monitor express'd  
Mysterious union with its native sea.

Even such a shell the universe itself  
Is to the ear of faith ; and there are times,  
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart  
Authentic tidings of invisible things ;  
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power ;  
And central peace, subsisting at the heart  
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,  
Adore, and worship, when you know it not ;  
Pious beyond the intention of your thought,  
Devout above the meaning of your will.  
Yes, you have felt, and may not cease to feel.  
The estate of man would be indeed forlorn,  
In false conclusions of the reasoning power  
Made the eye blind, and closed the passages  
Through which the ear converses with the heart.  
Has not the soul, the being of your life,  
Received a shock of awful consciousness,  
In some calm season, when these lofty rocks  
At night's approach bring down the unclouded sky  
To rest upon their circumambient walls ?  
A temple framing of dimensions vast,  
And yet not too enormous for the sound  
Of human anthems, — choral song, or burst  
Sublime of instrumental harmony,  
To glorify the Eternal ! What if these  
Did never break the stillness that prevails  
Here — if the solemn nightingale be mute,  
And the soft woodlark here did never chant  
Her vespers — Nature fails not to provide  
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air  
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights  
And blind recesses of the cavern'd rocks ;  
The little rills, and waters numberless,  
Inaudible by day-light, blend their notes  
With the loud streams ; and often, at the hour  
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,  
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,

One voice — the solitary raven, flying \*  
Athwart the concave of the dark-blue dome,  
Unseen, perchance above the power of sight —  
An iron knell ! with echoes from afar,  
Faint — and still fainter — as the cry, with which  
The wanderer accompanies her flight  
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,  
Diminishing by distance till it seem'd  
To expire, yet from the abyss is caught again,  
And yet again recover'd !

“ But descending  
From these imaginative heights, that yield  
Far-stretching views into eternity,  
Acknowledge that to nature's humbler power  
Your cherish'd sullenness is forced to bend  
Even here, where her amenities are sown  
With sparing hand. Then trust yourself abroad  
To range her blooming bowers and spacious fields,  
Where on the labours of the happy throng  
She smiles, including in her wide embrace  
City, and town, and tower, and sea with ships  
Sprinkled ; be our companion while we track  
Her rivers populous with gliding life ;  
While, free as air, o'er printless sands we march,  
And pierce the gloom of her majestic woods,  
Roaming, or resting under grateful shade,

\* It has been remarked that Wordsworth evinces throughout his writings, a most refined organic sensibility to the influence of sound, and indeed, that sounds and scenes were to him symbols, having their moral significances. These intimations abounding in his poems are considered by Mr. Hood, his biographer, “to unlock much of the apparent mystic hidden meaning of which it has been the fashion to speak in connection with the poet.” In reference to the passage here noted, Wordsworth stated that, “the mountains which enclosed the vale of Grasmere were particularly favourable to the reverberation of sound, and, that he had there frequently listened to the modifications which the voice of the raven underwent during its dusky flight.”

In peace and meditative cheerfulness :  
Where living things, and things inanimate,  
Do speak, at Heaven's command, to eye and ear,  
And speak to social reason's inner sense,  
With inarticulate language.

“ For the man,  
Who, in this spirit, communes with the forms  
Of Nature ; who, with understanding heart,  
Doth know and love such objects as excite  
No morbid passions, no disquietude,  
No vengeance, and no hatred, needs must feel  
So deeply, that unsatisfied with aught  
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose  
But seek for objects of a kindred love  
In fellow-natures and a kindred joy.  
Accordingly, he by degrees perceives  
His feelings of aversion soften'd down ;  
A holy tenderness pervade his frame.  
His sanity of reason not impair'd,  
Say rather, all his thoughts now flowing clear,  
From a clear fountain flowing, he looks round  
And seeks for good ; and finds the good he seeks ;  
Until abhorrence and contempt are things  
He only knows by name ; and if he hear  
From other mouths, the language which they speak,  
He is compassionate ; and has no thought,  
No feeling, which can overcome his love.

“ And further ; by contemplating these forms  
In the relations which they bear to man,  
He shall discern, how, through the various means  
Which silently they yield, are multiplied  
The spiritual presences of absent things,  
Convoked by knowledge ; and for his delight  
Still ready to obey the gentle call.  
Trust me, that for the instructed, time will come  
When they shall meet no object but may teach



Some acceptable lesson to their minds  
Of human suffering, or of human joy.  
For them shall all things speak of man ; they read  
Their duties in all forms ; and general laws,  
And local accidents, shall tend alike  
To rouse, to urge, and with the will confer  
The ability to spread the blessings wide  
Of true philanthropy. The light of love  
Not failing, perseverance from their steps  
Departing not, they shall at length obtain  
The glorious habit by which sense is made  
Subservient still to moral purposes,  
Auxiliar to divine. That change shall clothe  
The naked spirit, ceasing to deplore  
The burthen of existence. Science then  
Shall be a precious visitant ; and then,  
And then, and only then, be worthy of her name.  
For then her heart shall kindle ; her dull eye,  
Dull and inanimate, no more shall hang  
Chain'd to its object in brute slavery ;  
But taught with patient interest to watch  
The processes of things, and serve the cause  
Of order and distinctness, not for this  
Shall it forget that its most noble use,  
Its most illustrious province, must be found  
In furnishing clear guidance, a support  
✓ Not treacherous, to the mind's *excursive* power.  
So build we up the being that we are ;  
Thus deeply drinking in the soul of things,  
We shall be wise perforce ; and while inspired  
By choice, and conscious that the will is free,  
Unswerving shall we move, as if impell'd  
By strict necessity, along the path  
Of order and of good. Whate'er we see,  
Whate'er we feel, by agency direct  
Or indirect, shall tend to feed and nurse  
Our faculties, shall fix in calmer seats

Of moral strength, and raise to loftier heights  
Of love divine, our intellectual soul."

Here closed the sage that eloquent harangue,  
Pour'd forth with fervour in continuous stream ;  
Such as, remote, 'mid savage wilderness,  
An Indian chief discharges from his breast  
Into the hearing of assembled tribes,  
In open circle seated round, and hush'd  
As the unbreathing air, when not a leaf  
Stirs in the mighty woods. So did he speak.  
The words he utter'd shall not pass away ;  
For they sank into me — the bounteous gift  
Of one whom time and nature had made wise,  
Gracing his language with authority  
Which hostile spirits silently allow ;  
Of one accustom'd to desires that feed  
On fruitage gather'd from the tree of life ;  
To hopes on knowledge and experience built,  
Of one in whom persuasion and belief  
Had ripen'd into faith, and faith become  
A passionate intuition ; whence the soul,  
Though bound to earth by ties of pity and love,  
From all injurious servitude was free.

The sun, before his place of rest was reach'd,  
Had yet to travel far, but unto us,  
To us who stood low in that hollow dell,  
He had become invisible, — a pomp  
Leaving behind of yellow radiance spread  
Upon the mountain-sides, in contrast bold  
With ample shadows, seemingly no less  
Than those resplendent lights, his rich bequest,  
A dispensation of his evening power.  
Adown the path which from the glen had led  
The funeral train, the shepherd and his mate  
Were seen descending ; forth in transport ran

Our little page ; the rustic pair approach ;  
 And in the matron's aspect may be read  
 A plain assurance that the words which told  
 How that neglected pensioner was sent,  
 Before his time, into a quiet grave,  
 Had done to her humanity no wrong.  
 But we are kindly welcomed ; promptly served  
 With ostentatious zeal. Along the floor  
 Of the small cottage in the lonely dell  
 A grateful couch was spread for our repose ;  
 Where, in the guise of mountaineers, we slept,  
 Stretch'd upon fragrant heath, and lull'd by sound  
 Of far-off torrents charming the still night,  
 And to tired limbs and over-busy thoughts,  
 Inviting sleep and soft forgetfulness.

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## BOOK V.

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### THE PASTOR.

Farewell to the Valley — Reflections — Sight of a large and populous Vale — Solitary consents to go forward — Vale described — The Pastor's Dwelling, and some account of him — The Churchyard — Church and Monuments — The Solitary musing, and where — Roused — In the churchyard the Solitary communicates the thoughts which had recently passed through his mind — Lofty tone of the Wanderer's discourse of yesterday adverted to — Rite of Baptism, and the professions accompanying it, contrasted with the real state of human life — Inconsistency of the best men — Acknowledgement that practice falls far below the injunctions of duty as existing in the mind — General complaint of a falling-off in the value of life after the time of youth — Outward appearance of content and happiness in degree illusive — Pastor approaches — Appeal made to him — His answer — Wanderer in sympathy with him —

Suggestion that the least ambitious inquirers may be most free from error — The Pastor is desired to give some portraits of the living or dead from his own observations of life among these mountains — and for what purpose — Pastor consents — Mountain cottage — Excellent qualities of its inhabitants — Solitary expresses his pleasure ; but denies the praise of virtue to worth of this kind — Feelings of the Priest before he enters upon his account of persons interred in the churchyard — Graves of unbaptized Infants — What sensations they excite — Funereal and sepulchral observances — Whence — Ecclesiastical establishments — Whence derived — Profession of belief in the doctrine of immortality.

“FAREWELL, deep valley, with thy one rude house,  
And its small lot of life-supporting fields  
And guardian rocks ! With unreverted eyes  
I cannot pass thy bounds, attractive seat !  
To the still influx of the morning light  
Open, and day's pure cheerfulness, but veil'd  
From human observation, as if yet  
Primeval forests wrapp'd thee round with dark  
Impenetrable shade ; once more, farewell,  
Majestic circuit, beautiful abyss !  
By Nature destined from the birth of things  
For quietness profound !”

Upon the side  
Of that green slope, the outlet of the vale,  
Lingering behind my comrades, thus I breath'd  
A parting tribute to a spot that seem'd  
Like the fix'd centre of a troubled world.  
And now, pursuing leisurely my way,  
“How vain,” thought I, “it is, by change of place  
To seek that comfort which the mind denies ;  
Yet trial and temptation oft are shunn'd  
Wisely ; and by such tenure do we hold  
Frail life's possessions, that even they whose fate  
Yields no peculiar reason of complaint  
Might, by the promise that is here, be won  
To steal from active duties, and embrace

Obscurity, and calm forgetfulness.  
Knowledge, methinks, in these disorder'd times,  
Should be allow'd a privilege to have  
Her anchorites, like piety of old ;  
Men, who, from faction sacred, and unstain'd  
By war, might, if so minded, turn aside  
Uncensured, and subsist, a scatter'd few,  
Living to God and nature, and content  
With that communion. Consecrated be  
The spots where such abide ! But happier still  
The man, whom, furthermore, a hope attends  
That meditation and research may guide  
His privacy to principles and powers  
Discover'd, or invented, or set forth,  
Through his acquaintance with the ways of truth,  
In lucid order ; so that, when his course  
Is run, some faithful eulogist may say  
He sought not praise — and praise did overlook  
His unobtrusive merit ; but his life,  
Sweet to himself, was exercised in good  
That shall survive his name and memory."

Acknowledgments of gratitude sincere  
Accompanied these musings ; fervent thanks  
For my own peaceful lot and happy choice ;  
A choice that from the passions of the world  
Withdrew, and fix'd me in a still retreat,  
Shelter'd but not to social duties lost,  
Secluded, but not buried ; and with song  
Cheering my days, and with industrious thought,  
With the ever-welcome company of books,  
By virtuous friendship's soul-sustaining aid,  
And with the blessings of domestic love.

Thus occupied in mind I paced along,  
Following the rugged road by sledge or wheel  
Worn in the moorland, till I overtook



My two associates, in the morning sun  
Halting together on a rocky knoll,  
From which the road descended rapidly  
To the green meadows of another vale.

Here did our pensive host put forth his hand  
In sign of farewell. "Nay," the old man said,  
"The fragrant air its coolness still retains ;  
The herds and flocks are yet abroad to crop  
The dewy grass ; you cannot leave us now,  
We must not part at this inviting hour."  
To that injunction, earnestly express'd,  
He yielded, though reluctant ; for his mind  
Instinctively disposed him to retire  
To his own covert ; as a billow, heaved  
Upon the beach, rolls back into the sea.  
So we descend ; and winding round a rock,  
Attain a point that shew'd the valley, stretch'd \*  
In length before us ; and, not distant far,  
Upon a rising ground, a gray church-tower,  
Whose battlements were screen'd by tufted trees.  
And towards a crystal mere, that lay beyond,

\* Quitting the cottage and Blea Tarn and crossing the ridge which hems in the Solitary's retreat in that direction, the poet and his companions descend into the vale of Little Langdale. Here, giving play to his imagination, he converts the large farmhouse which stands, embowered among yew trees, at the head of the dale, into a parsonage ; and then, by another wave of the magic wand, the vale of Langdale, its tarn, and the rude chapel which once stood there, are transmuted into the more stately and spacious vale of Grasmere and its ancient parish church. In describing the "Pastor," Wordsworth had no one individual in view, but, entertaining an opinion that it favoured "the beneficial influence of the Church of England that the patronage of its benefices should be attached to the estates of noble families of ancient gentry," he takes occasion here, to portray the character of a country gentleman, of aristocratic birth and connexions, brought by his pastoral office into close relation with the peasantry of his native district.

Among steep hills and woods embosom'd, flow'd  
 A copious stream with boldly-winding courses ;  
 Here traceable, there hidden, there again  
 To sight restored, and glittering in the sun.  
 On the stream's bank, and everywhere, appear'd  
 Fair dwellings, single, or in social knots,  
 Some scatter'd o'er the level, others perch'd  
 On the hill-sides, a cheerful quiet scene,  
 Now in its morning purity array'd.

“As 'mid some happy valley of the Alps,”  
 Said I, “once happy, ere tyrannic power,  
 Wantonly breaking in upon the Swiss,  
 Destroy'd their unoffending commonwealth,  
 A popular equality doth seem  
 Here to prevail ; and yet a house of state  
 Stands yonder, one beneath whose roof, methinks,  
 A rural lord might dwell.” “No feudal pomp,”  
 Replied our friend, a chronicler who stood  
 Where'er he moved upon familiar ground —  
 “Nor feudal power is there ; but there abides,  
 In his allotted home, a genuine priest,  
 The shepherd of his flock ; or, as a king  
 Is styled, when most affectionately praised,  
 The father of his people — such is he ;  
 And rich and poor, and young and old, rejoice  
 Under his spiritual sway, collected round him  
 In this sequestered realm. He hath vouchsafed  
 To me some portion of his kind regard ;  
 And something also of his inner mind  
 Hath he imparted — but I speak of him  
 As he is known to all.

“The calm delights  
 Of unambitious piety he chose,  
 And learning's solid dignity ; though born  
 Of knightly race, not wanting powerful friends.  
 This good to reap, these pleasures to secure,

Hither, in prime of manhood, he withdrew  
From academic bowers. He loved the spot —  
Who does not love his native soil? — he prized  
The ancient rural character, composed  
Of simple manners, feelings unsuppress'd  
And undisguised, and strong and serious thought :  
A character reflected in himself,  
With such embellishment as well beseems  
His rank and sacred function. This deep vale  
Is lengthen'd out by many a winding reach,  
Not visible to us ; and one of these  
A turreted manorial hall adorns,  
In which the good man's ancestors have dwelt  
From age to age, the patrons of this cure.  
To them, and to his decorating hand,  
The vicar's dwelling, and the whole domain,  
Owes that presiding aspect which might well  
Attract your notice ; statelier than could else  
Have been bestow'd, in course of common chance,  
On an unwealthy mountain benefice."

" This said, oft halting, we pursued our way ;  
Nor reach'd the village church-yard till the sun,  
Travelling at steadier pace than ours, had risen  
Above the summits of the highest hills,  
And round our path darted oppressive beams.

As chanced, the portals of the sacred pile  
Stood open ; and we enter'd. On my frame,  
At such transition from the fervid air,  
A grateful coolness fell, that seem'd to strike  
The heart, in concert with that temperate awe  
Not framed to nice proportions was the pile, \*

\* The previous note renders it almost unnecessary to state that the church here described is that of Grasmere. Wordsworth, when dictating some remarks on this portion of the Excursion, laments that the rude antique majesty of the edifice should have

But large and massy, for duration built ;  
With pillars crowded, and the roof upheld  
By naked rafters intricately cross'd,  
Like leafless underboughs in some thick grove,  
All wither'd by the depth of shade above.  
Admonitory texts inscribed the walls,  
Each in its ornamental scroll enclosed ;  
Each also crown'd with wingèd heads — a pair  
Of rudely-painted cherubim. The floor  
Of nave and aisle, in unpretending guise,  
Was occupied by oaken benches ranged  
In seemly rows ; the chancel only shew'd  
Some inoffensive marks of earthly state  
And vain distinction. A capacious pew  
Of sculptured oak stood here, with drapery lined ;  
And marble monuments were here display'd  
Upon the walls ; and on the floor beneath  
Sepulchral stones appear'd, with emblems graven,

been impaired by the painting of the rafters, and by the removal of the old but appropriate oak benches. He also notices it as peculiar that the men and women sat on opposite sides of the church, but the custom we believe prevails elsewhere in the district. It afforded the poet pleasure to contemplate the time when the yew trees, by their growth, would shed a solemnity over the church-yard, and thus in some degree compensate for other changes which he deplored. Of these trees the following interesting particulars are given. Sir George Beaumont having sold the beautiful piece of water called Loughrigg Tarn, placed the purchase money, twenty pounds, at Wordsworth's disposal for any local purpose. Accordingly, he resolved to plant yew trees in the church-yard, and having caused fitting inclosures to be made he planted, principally with his own hand, the trees which now thrive so well there. "May the trees," he adds, "be taken care of when we are all gone, and some of them will perhaps, at some far distant time, rival the majesty of the yew at Lorton, and those which I have described as growing at Borrowdale, where they are still to be seen in grand assemblage." This wish of his, future generations will reverently obey, for his own honoured remains now repose under their shelter by the side of the murmuring Rothay.

And foot-worn epitaphs, and some with small  
And shining effigies of brass inlaid.  
The tribute by these various records claim'd,  
Without reluctance did we pay ; and read  
The ordinary chronicle of birth,  
Office, alliance, and promotion — all  
Ending in dust ; of upright magistrates,  
Grave doctors strenuous for the mother church,  
And uncorrupted senators, alike  
To king and people true. A brazen plate,  
Not easily decipher'd, told of one  
Whose course of earthly honour was begun  
In quality of page among the train  
Of the eighth Henry, when he cross'd the seas  
His royal state to shew, and prove his strength  
In tournament upon the fields of France.  
Another tablet register'd the death,  
And praised the gallant bearing of a knight,  
Tried in the sea-fights of the second Charles.  
Near this brave knight his father lay entomb'd ;  
And, to the silent language giving voice,  
I read how, in his manhood's earlier day,  
He, 'mid the afflictions of intestine war,  
And rightful government subverted, found  
One only solace, that he had espoused  
A virtuous lady tenderly beloved  
For her benign affections ; and for this  
Yet more endear'd to him, that in her state  
Of wedlock richly crown'd with Heaven's regard,  
She with a numerous issue fill'd his house,  
Who throve, like plants uninjured by the storm  
That laid their country waste. No need to speak  
Of less particular notices assign'd  
To youth or maiden gone before their time,  
And matrons and unwedded sisters old ;  
Whose charity and goodness were rehearsed  
In modest panegyric. " These dim lines,



What would they tell?" said I; but, from the task  
 Of puzzling out that faded narrative,  
 With whisper soft my venerable friend  
 Call'd me; and, looking down the darksome aisle,  
 I saw the tenant of that lonely vale  
 Standing apart; with curvèd arm reclined  
 On the baptismal font; his pallid face  
 Upturn'd, as if his mind were rapt, or lost  
 In some abstraction; gracefully he stood,  
 The semblance bearing of a sculptured form  
 That leans upon a monumental urn  
 In peace, from morn to night, from year to year.

Him from that posture did the sexton rouse;  
 Who enter'd, humming carelessly a tune,\*  
 Continuation haply of the notes  
 That had beguiled the work from which he came,  
 With spade and mattock o'er his shoulder hung;  
 To be deposited for future need  
 In their appointed place. The pale Recluse  
 Withdrew; and straight we follow'd to a spot  
 Where sun and shade were intermix'd; for there  
 A broad oak, stretching forth its leafy arms  
 From an adjoining pasture overhung  
 Small space of that green churchyard with a light  
 And pleasant awning. On the moss-grown wall  
 My ancient friend and I together took  
 Our seats; and thus the Solitary spake,  
 Standing before us:—"Did you note the mien  
 Of that self-solaced, easy-hearted churl,  
 Death's hireling, who scoops out his neighbour's grave,  
 Or wraps an old acquaintance up in clay,

\* *Hamlet*. — Has this fellow no feeling of his business? he sings at grave making.

*Horatio*. — Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

*Hamlet*. — 'Tis e'en so: the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

As unconcern'd as when he plants a tree?  
I was abruptly summon'd by his voice  
From some affecting images and thoughts,  
And from the company of serious words.  
Much, yesterday, was said in glowing phrase  
Of our sublime dependences, and hopes  
For future states of being ; and the wings  
Of speculation, joyfully outspread,  
Hover'd above our destiny on earth ;  
But stoop, and place the prospect of the soul  
In sober contrast with reality  
And man's substantial life. If this mute earth  
Of what it holds could speak, and every grave  
Were as a volume, shut, yet capable  
Of yielding its contents to eye and ear,  
We should recoil, stricken with sorrow and shame,  
To see disclosed, by such dread proof, how ill  
That which is done accords with what is known  
To reason, and by conscience is enjoin'd ;  
How idly, how perversely, life's whole course,  
To this conclusion deviates from the line,  
Or of the end stops short, proposed to all  
At its aspiring outset. Mark the babe  
Not long accusom'd to this breathing world ;  
One that hath barely learn'd to shape a smile,  
? Though yet irrational of soul, to grasp  
With tiny fingers — to let fall a tear ;  
And, as the heavy cloud of sleep dissolves,  
To stretch his limbs, bemocking, as might seem,  
The outward functions of intelligent man ;  
A grave proficient in amusing feats  
Of puppetry, that from the lap declare  
His expectations, and announce his claims  
To that inheritance which millions rue  
That they were born to ! In due time  
A day of solemn ceremonial comes ;  
When they, who for this minor hold in trust

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Rights that transcend the humblest heritage  
 Of mere humanity, present their charge,  
 For this occasion daintily adorn'd,  
 At the baptismal font. And when the pure  
 And consecrating element hath cleansed  
 The original stain, the child is there received  
 Into the second ark, Christ's Church, with trust  
 That he, from wrath redeem'd, therein shall float  
 Over the billows of this troublesome world,  
 To the fair land of everlasting life.  
 Corrupt affections, covetous desires,  
 Are all renounced ; high as the thought of man  
 Can carry virtue, virtue is profess'd ;  
 A dedication made, a promise given  
 For due provision to control and guide,  
 And unremitting progress to insure  
 In holiness and truth."

"You cannot blame,"

Here interposing, fervently I said,  
 "Rites which attest that man by nature lies  
 Bedded for good and evil in a gulf  
 Fearfully low ; nor will your judgment scorn  
 Those services whereby attempt is made  
 To lift the creature towards that eminence  
 On which, now fallen, erewhile in majesty  
 He stood ; or if not so, whose top serene  
 At least, he feels 'tis given him to descry ;  
 Not without aspirations evermore  
 Returning, and injunctions from within  
 Doubt to cast off and weariness ; in trust  
 That what the soul perceives, if glory lost,  
 May be, through pains and persevering hope,  
 Recover'd ; or if hitherto unknown,  
 Lies within reach, and one day shall be gain'd."

"I blame them not," he calmly answer'd. "No,  
 The outward ritual and establish'd forms

With which communities of men invest  
These inward feelings, and th' aspiring views  
To which the lips give public utterance,  
Are both a natural process, and by me  
Shall pass uncensured ; though the issue prove,  
Bringing from age to age its own reproach,  
Incongruous, impotent, and blank. But oh !  
If to be weak is to be wretched — miserable,  
As the lost angel by a human voice  
Hath mournfully pronounced, then, in my mind,  
Far better not to move at all than move  
By impulse sent from such illusive power, —  
That finds and cannot fasten down ; that grasps  
And is rejoiced, and loses while it grasps ;  
That tempts, emboldens, — doth a while sustain,  
And then betrays ; accuses and inflicts  
Remorseless punishment ; and so retreads  
Th' inevitable circle ; better far  
Than this, to graze the herb in thoughtless peace,  
By foresight or remembrance undisturb'd !

“Philosophy ! and thou, more vaunted name,  
Religion ! with thy statelier retinue,  
Faith, Hope, and Charity — from the visible world  
Choose for your emblems whatsoe'er ye find  
Of safest guidance and of firmest trust —  
The torch, the star, the anchor — nor except  
The cross itself, at whose unconscious feet  
The generations of mankind have knelt  
Ruefully seized, and shedding bitter tears,  
And through that conflict seeking rest — of you,  
High-titled powers, am I constrain'd to ask,  
Here standing, with th' unvoyageable sky  
In faint reflection of infinitude,  
Stretch'd overhead, and at my pensive feet  
A subterraneous magazine of bones,  
In whose dark vaults my own shall soon be laid,

Where are your triumphs—your dominion where—  
 And in what age admitted and confirm'd?  
 Not for a happy land do I inquire,  
 Island or grove, that hides a blessèd few  
 Who, with obedience willing and sincere,  
 To your serene authorities conform;  
 But whom, I ask, of individual souls,  
 Have ye withdrawn from passion's crooked ways,  
 Inspired, and thoroughly fortified? If the heart  
 Could be inspected to its inmost folds  
 By sight undazzled with the glare of praise,  
 Who shall be named—in the resplendent line  
 Of sages, martyrs, confessors—the man  
 Whom the best might of conscience, truth, and hope,  
 For one day's little compass, has preserved  
 From painful and discreditable shocks  
 Of contradiction, from some vague desire  
 Culpably cherish'd, or corrupt relapse  
 To some unsanction'd fear?"

"If this be so,  
 And man," said I, "be in his noblest shape  
 Thus pitiably infirm; then, He who made,  
 And who shall judge the creature, will forgive.  
 Yet, in its general tenor, your complaint  
 Is all too true; and surely not misplaced;  
 For, from this pregnant spot of ground, such thoughts  
 Rise to the notice of a serious mind  
 By natural exhalation. With the dead  
 In their repose, the living in their mirth,  
 Who can reflect, unmoved, upon the round  
 Of smooth and solemnized complacencies,  
 By which, in Christian lands from age to age  
 Profession mocks performance. Earth is sick,  
 And Heaven is weary, of the hollow words  
 Which states and kingdoms utter when they talk  
 Of truth and justice. Turn to private life  
 And social neighbourhood; look we to ourselves;



A light of duty shines on every day  
For all ; and yet how few are warm'd or cheer'd !  
How few who mingle with their fellow-men  
And still remain self-govern'd, and apart,  
Like this our honour'd friend ; and thence acquire  
Right to expect his vigorous decline,  
That promises to th' end a blest old age !”

“ Yet,” with a smile of triumph, thus exclaim'd  
The Solitary, “ in the life of man,  
If to the poetry of common speech  
Faith may be given, we see as in a glass  
A true reflection of the circling year,  
With all its seasons. Grant that spring is there,  
In spite of many a rough untoward blast,  
Hopeful and promising with buds and flowers ;  
Yet where is glowing summer's long rich day,  
That *ought* to follow, faithfully express'd ?  
And mellow autumn, charged with bounteous fruit,  
Where is she imaged—in what favour'd clime  
Her lavish pomp and ripe magnificence ?  
Yet, while the better part is miss'd, the worse  
In man's autumnal season is set forth  
With a resemblance not to be denied,  
And that contents him ; bowers that hear no more  
The voice of gladness, less and less supply  
Of outward sunshine and internal warmth :  
And, with this change, sharp air and falling leaves,  
Foretelling total winter, blank and cold.

“ How gay the habitations that adorn  
This fertile valley ! Not a house but seems  
To give assurance of content within,  
Embosom'd happiness and placid love ;  
As if the sunshine of the day were met  
With answering brightness in the hearts of all  
Who walk this favour'd ground. But chance regards,

And notice forced upon incurious ears,  
These, if these only, acting in despite  
Of the encomiums by my friend pronounced  
On humble life, forbid the judging mind  
To trust the smiling aspect of this fair  
And noiseless commonwealth. The simple race  
Of mountaineers, by nature's self removed  
From foul temptations, and by constant care  
Of a good shepherd tended, as themselves  
Do tend their flocks, these share man's general lot  
With little mitigation. They escape,  
Perchance, guilt's heavier woes; and do not feel  
The tedium of fantastic idleness;  
Yet life, as with the multitude, with them  
Is fashion'd like an ill-constructed tale  
That on the outset wastes its gay desires,  
Its fair adventures, its enlivening hopes,  
And pleasant interests — for the sequel leaving  
Old things repeated with diminish'd grace,  
And all the labour'd novelties, at best  
Imperfect substitutes, whose use and power  
Evince the want and weakness whence they spring."

While in this serious mood we held discourse,  
The reverend Pastor toward the churchyard gate  
Approach'd; and, with a mild respectful air  
Of native cordiality, our friend  
Advanced to greet him. With a gracious mien  
Was he received, and mutual joy prevail'd.  
A while they stood in conference, and I guess  
That he, who now upon the mossy wall  
Sate by my side, had vanish'd, if a wish  
Could have transferr'd him to his lonely house  
Within the circuit of those guardian rocks.  
For me, I look'd upon the pair, well-pleased  
Nature had framed them both, and both were mark'd  
By circumstance with intermixture fine

Of contrast and resemblance. To an oak  
Hardy and grand, a weather-beaten oak,  
Fresh in the strength and majesty of age,  
One might be liken'd : flourishing appear'd,  
Though somewhat past the fulness of his prime,  
The other — like a stately sycamore,  
That spreads, in gentler pomp, its honey'd shade.

A general greeting was exchanged ; and soon  
The Pastor learn'd that his approach had given  
A welcome interruption to discourse  
Grave, and in truth full often sad. “ Is man  
A child of hope ? Do generations press  
On generations, without progress made ?  
Halts the individual, ere his hairs be gray,  
Perforce ? Are we a creature in whom good  
Preponderates, or evil ? Doth the will  
Acknowledge reason's law ? A living power  
Is virtue, — or no better than a name —  
Fleeting as health or beauty, and unsound ?  
So that the only substance which remains,  
(For thus the tenor of complaint hath run),  
Among so many shadows, are the pains  
And penalties of miserable life,  
Doom'd to decay, and then expire in dust !  
Our cogitations this way have been drawn,  
These are the points,” the Wanderer said, “ on which  
Our inquest turns. Accord, good sir, the light  
Of your experience, to dispel this gloom.  
By your persuasive wisdom shall the heart  
That frets, or languishes, be still'd and cheer'd.”

“ Our nature,” said the Priest, in mild reply,  
“ Angels may weigh and fathom : they perceive,  
With undistemper'd and unclouded spirit,  
The object as it is ; but for ourselves,  
That speculative height we may not reach.

The good and evil are our own ; and we  
Are that which we would contemplate from far.  
Knowledge, for us, is difficult to gain —  
Is difficult to gain, and hard to keep —  
As virtue's self ; like virtue is beset  
With snares ; tried, tempted, subject to decay.  
Love, admiration, fear, desire, and hate,  
Blind were we without these ; through these alone  
Are capable to notice or discern,  
Or to record ! we judge, but cannot be  
Indifferent judges. 'Spite of proudest boast,  
Reason, best reason, is t' imperfect man  
An effort only, and a noble aim ;  
A crown, an attribute of sovereign power,  
Still to be courted — never to be won.  
Look forth, or each man dive into himself,  
What sees he, but a creature too perturb'd,  
That is transported to excess ; that yearns,  
Regrets, or trembles, wrongly, or too much ;  
Hopes rashly, in disgust as rash recoils ;  
Battens on spleen, or moulders in despair.  
Thus truth is miss'd, and comprehension fails ;  
And darkness and delusion round our path  
Spread, from disease, whose subtle injury lurks  
Within the very faculty of sight.

“ Yet for the general purposes of faith  
In Providence, for solace and support,  
We may not doubt that who can best subject  
The will to reason's law, can strictliest live  
And act in that obedience, he shall gain  
The clearest apprehension of those truths,  
Which unassisted reason's utmost power  
Is too infirm to reach. But, waiving this,  
And our regards confining within bounds  
Of less exalted consciousness, through which  
The very multitude are free to range,

We safely may affirm that human life  
Is either fair or tempting, a soft scene  
Grateful to sight, refreshing to the soul,  
Or a forbidden tract of cheerless view ;  
Even as the same is look'd at or approach'd.  
Permit me," said the Priest, continuing, " here  
To use an illustration of my thought,  
Drawn from the very spot on which we stand.  
In changeful April, when, as he is wont,  
Winter has reassumed a short-lived sway  
And whiten'd all the surface of the fields,  
If, from the sullen region of the north,  
Towards the circuit of this holy ground,  
Your walk conducts you, ere the vigorous sun,  
High climbing, hath attain'd his noon-tide height,  
These mounds, transversely lying side by side  
From east to west, before you will appear  
A dreary plain of unillumined snow,  
With more than wintry cheerlessness and gloom  
Saddening the heart. Go forward and look back ;  
On the same circuit of this churchyard ground  
Look, from the quarter whence the lord of light,  
Of life, of love, and gladness, doth dispense  
His beams, which, unexcluded in their fall,  
Upon the southern side of every grave  
Have gently exercised a melting power,  
*Then* will a vernal prospect, greet your eye,  
All fresh and beautiful, and green and bright,  
Hopeful and cheerful — vanish'd is the snow,  
Vanish'd or hidden ; and the whole domain,  
To some, too lightly minded, might appear  
A meadow carpet for the dancing hours.  
This contrast, not unsuitable to life,  
Is to that other state more apposite,  
Death, and its twofold aspect ; wintry one,  
Cold, sullen, blank, from hope and joy shut out —  
The other, which the ray divine hath touch'd,



Replete with vivid promise, bright as spring."

"We see, then, as we feel," the Wanderer thus  
With a complacent animation spake,  
"And in your judgment, sir, the mind's repose  
On evidence is not to be insured  
By act of naked reason. Moral truth  
Is no mechanic structure, built by rule ;  
And which, once built, retains a steadfast shape  
And undisturb'd proportions ; but a thing  
Subject you deem to vital accidents ;  
And, like the water-lily, lives and thrives,  
Whose root is fixed in stable earth, whose head  
Floats on the tossing waves. With joy sincere  
I resalute these sentiments, confirm'd  
By your authority. But how acquire  
The inward principle that gives effect  
To outward argument, the passive will  
Meek to admit, the active energy,  
Strong and unbounded to embrace, and firm  
To keep and cherish — how shall man unite  
A self-forgetting tenderness of heart  
And earth-despising dignity of soul —  
Wise in that union, and without it blind ?"

"The way," said I, "to court, if not obtain  
The ingenuous mind, apt to be set aright,  
This, in the lonely dell discoursing, you  
Declared at large ; and by what exercise  
From visible nature or the inner self  
Power may be train'd, and renovation brought  
To those who need the gift. But, after all,  
Is aught so certain as that man is doom'd  
To breathe beneath a vault of ignorance —  
The natural roof of that dark house in which  
His soul is pent ? How little can be known !  
This is the wise man's sigh ; how far we err —

This is the good man's not unfrequent pang.  
And they perhaps err least, the lowly class  
Whom a benign necessity compels  
To follow reason's least ambitious course ;  
Such do I mean, who, unperplex'd by doubt  
And unincited by a wish to look  
Into high objects further than they may,  
Pace to and fro, from morn till eventide,  
The narrow avenue of daily toil,  
For daily bread."

"Yes," buoyantly exclaim'd  
The pale Recluse — "praise to the sturdy plough,  
And patient spade and shepherd's simple crook,  
And ponderous loom resounding while it holds  
Body and mind in one captivity ;  
And let the light mechanic tool be hail'd  
With honour, which, encasing by the power  
Of long companionship, the artist's hand,  
Cuts off that hand, with all its world of nerves,  
From a too busy commerce with the heart !  
Inglorious implements of craft and toil,  
Both ye that shape and build, and ye that force,  
By slow solicitation, earth to yield  
Her annual bounty sparingly dealt forth  
With wise reluctance, you would I extol  
Not for gross good alone which ye produce,  
But for the impertinent and ceaseless strife  
Of proofs and reasons ye preclude — in those  
Who to your dull society are born,  
And with their humble birthright rest content,  
Would I had ne'er renounced it !"

A slight flush  
Of moral anger previously had tinged  
The old man's cheek ; but at this closing turn  
Of self-reproach, it pass'd away. Said he

“That which we feel we utter : as we think  
So have we argued ; reaping for our pains  
No visible recompence. For our relief,  
You,” to the Pastor turning, thus he spake,  
“Have kindly interposed. May I entreat  
Your further help ? The mine of real life  
Dig for us ; and present us, in the shape  
Of virgin ore, that gold which we by pains  
Fruitless as those of aery alchemists,  
Seek from the torturing crucible. There lies  
Around us a domain where you have long  
Held spiritual sway, have guided and consoled,  
And watch’d the outward course and inner heart.  
Give us, for our abstractions, solid facts ;  
For our disputes, plain pictures. Say what man  
He is who cultivates yon hanging field ;  
What qualities of mind she bears, who comes,  
For morn and evening service, with her pail,  
To that green pasture ; place before our sight  
The family who dwell within yon house  
Fenced round with glittering laurel ; or in that  
Below, from which the curling smoke ascends.  
Or rather, as we stand on holy earth,  
And have the dead around us, take from them  
Your instances ; for they are both best known,  
And by frail man most equitably judged.  
Epitomize the life ; pronounce, you can,  
Authentic epitaphs on some of these  
Who, from their lowly mansions hither brought,  
Beneath this turf lie mouldering at our feet.  
So, by your records, may our doubts be solved ;  
And so, not searching higher, we may learn  
To prize the breath we share with human kind,  
And look upon the dust of man with awe.”

The Priest replied : — “An office you impose  
For which peculiar requisites are mine ;

Yet much, I feel, is wanting — else the task  
Would be most grateful. True indeed it is  
That they whom death has hidden from our sight  
Are worthiest of the mind's regard ; with these  
The future cannot contradict the past :  
Mortality's last exercise and proof  
Is undergone ; the transit made that shews  
The very soul, reveal'd as it departs.  
Yet, on your first suggestion, will I give,  
Ere we descend into these silent vaults,  
One picture from the living.

“ You behold,  
High on the breast of yon dark mountain, dark  
With stony barrenness, a shining speck  
Bright as a sunbeam sleeping till a shower  
Brush it away, or cloud pass over it ;  
And such it might be deem'd — a sleeping sunbeam ;  
But 'tis a plot of cultivated ground,  
Cut off, an island in the dusky waste ;  
And that attractive brightness is its own.  
The lofty site, by Nature framed, to tempt,  
Amid a wilderness of rocks and stones,  
The tiller's hand, a hermit might have chosen,  
For opportunity presented thence  
Far forth to send his wandering eye o'er land  
And ocean, and look down upon the works,  
The habitations, and the ways of men,  
Himself unseen. But no tradition tells  
That ever hermit dipp'd his maple dish  
In the sweet spring that lurks 'mid yon green fields ;  
And no such visionary views belong  
To those who occupy and till the ground,  
And on the bosom of the mountain dwell —  
A wedded pair in childless solitude.  
A house of stones collected on the spot,  
By rude hands built, with rocky knolls in front,  
Back'd also by a ledge of rock, whose crest

Of birch-trees waves above the chimney-top ;  
In shape, in size, and colour, an abode  
Such as in unsafe times of Border war  
Might have been wish'd for and contrived, to elude  
The eye of roving plunderer — for their need  
Suffices ; and unshaken bears the assault  
Of their most dreaded foe, the strong south-west,  
In anger blowing from the distant sea.  
Alone within her solitary hut ;  
There, or within the compass of her fields,  
At any moment may the dame be found,  
True as the stock-dove to her shallow nest  
And to the grove that holds it. She beguiles  
By intermingled work of house and field  
The summer's day, and winter's ; with success  
Not equal, but sufficient to maintain,  
Even at the worst, a smooth stream of content,  
Until the expected hour at which her mate  
From the far-distant quarry's vault returns,  
And by his converse crowns a silent day  
With evening cheerfulness. In powers of mind,  
In scale of culture, few among my flock  
Hold lower rank than this sequester'd pair :  
But humbleness of heart descends from heaven :  
And that best gift of Heav'n hath fall'n on them —  
Abundant recompence for every want.  
Stoop from your height, ye proud, and copy these !  
Who, in their noiseless dwelling-place, can hear  
The voice of wisdom whispering Scripture texts  
For the mind's government, or temper's peace ;  
And recommending for their mutual need,  
Forgiveness, patience, hope, and charity !”

“Much was I pleased,” the gray-hair'd Wanderer said  
“When to those shining fields our notice first  
You turn'd ; and yet more pleased have from your lips  
Gather'd this fair report of those who dwell



In that retirement ; whither, by such course  
Of evil hap and good as oft awaits  
A lone wayfaring man, I once was brought.  
Dark on my road the autumnal evening fell  
While I was traversing yon mountain-pass,  
And night succeeded with unusual gloom,  
So that my feet and hands at length became  
Guides better than mine eyes — until a light  
High in the gloom appear'd, too high, methought,  
For human habitation ; but I long'd  
To reach it, destitute of other hope.  
I look'd with steadiness as sailors look  
On the north star, or watch-tower's distant lamp,  
And saw the light, now fix'd, and shifting now,  
Not like a dancing meteor, but in line  
Of never-varying motion, to and fro.  
'It is no night-fire of the naked hills,'  
Said I — 'some friendly covert must be near.'  
With this persuasion thitherward my steps  
I turn, and reach at last the guiding light ;  
Joy to myself ! but to the heart of her  
Who there was standing on the open hill  
(The same kind matron whom your tongue hath praised)  
Alarm and disappointment ! The alarm  
Ceased, when she learn'd through what mishap I came  
And by what help had gain'd those distant fields.  
Drawn from her cottage, on that open height,  
Bearing a lantern in her hand she stood,\*

\* The entire picture here drawn from nature and real life, gives a faithful representation of a worthy couple, Jonathan and Betty Yewdale, who dwelt in a cottage called Hackett, standing on the southern extremity of the ridge which divides the two Langdales. Wordsworth became intimately acquainted with them from the circumstance of some of his children having been placed under their care after an illness which required change of air : and the family were in the habit of going there to drink tea on fine summer afternoons. This friendly intercourse afforded him an insight to the characters, habits, and lives of these good, and as he terms them, "in the main, wise people."

Or paced the ground, to guide her husband home  
By that unwearied signal, kenn'd afar ;  
An anxious duty ! which the lofty site,  
Far from all public road or beaten way,  
And traversed only by a few faint paths,  
Imposes, whensoever untoward chance  
(Such chance is rare) detains him till the night  
Falls black upon the hills. ' But come,' she said,  
' Come, let me lead you to our poor abode :  
Behind those rocks it stands, as if it shunn'd,  
In churlishness, the eye of all mankind ;  
But the few guests that seek the door receive  
Most hearty welcome.' Entering I beheld  
A blazing fire — beside a clean hearth. ?  
Sate down ; and to her office, with leave ask'd  
The dame return'd. Before that glowing pile  
Of mountain turf required the builder's hand  
Its wasted splendour to repair, the door  
Open'd and she re-enter'd with glad looks,  
Her helpmate following. Hospitable fare,  
Frank conversation, made the evening's treat :  
Need a bewilder'd traveller wish for more ?  
But more was given ; the eye, the mind, the heart,  
Found exercise in noting as we sate  
By the bright fire, the good man's face — composed  
Of features elegant ; an open brow  
Of undisturb'd humanity ; a cheek  
Suffused with something of a feminine hue ;  
Eyes beaming courtesy and mild regard ;  
But, in the quicker turns of the discourse,  
Expression slowly varying, that evinced  
A tardy apprehension. From a fount  
Lost, thought I, in the obscurities of time,  
But honour'd once, these features and that mien  
May have descended, though I see them here.  
In such a man, so gentle and subdued,  
Withal so graceful in his gentleness,

A race illustrious for heroic deeds,  
Humbled, but not degraded, may expire.  
This pleasing fancy (cherish'd and upheld  
By sundry recollections of such fall  
From high to low, ascent from low to high,  
As books record, and even the careless mind  
Cannot but notice among men and things)  
Went with me to the place of my repose.

“Roused by the crowing cock at dawn of day,  
I yet had risen too late to interchange  
A morning salutation with my host,  
Gone forth already to the far-off seat  
Of his day's work. ‘Three dark mid-winter months  
Pass,’ said the matron, ‘and I never see,  
Save when the Sabbath brings its kind release,  
My helpmate's face by light of day. He quits  
His door in darkness, nor till dusk returns.  
And, through Heaven's blessing, thus we gain the bread  
For which we pray ; and for the wants provide  
Of sickness, accident, and helpless age.  
Companions have I many ; many friends,  
Dependents, comforters : my wheel, my fire,  
All day the house-clock ticking in mine ear,  
The cackling hen, the tender chicken brood,  
And the wild birds that gather round my porch.  
This honest sheep-dog's countenance I read ;  
With him can talk ; nor seldom waste a word  
On creatures less intelligent and shrewd.  
And if the blustering wind that drives the clouds,  
Care not for me, he lingers round my door,  
And makes me pastime when our tempers suit :  
But, above all, my thoughts are my support.’  
The matron ended, nor could I forbear  
To exclaim, ‘O happy ! yielding to the law  
Of these privations, richer in the main ;  
While thankless thousands are oppress'd and clogg'd

By ease and leisure ; by the very wealth  
 And pride of opportunity made poor ;  
 While tens of thousands falter in their path,  
 And sink, through utter want of cheering light ;  
 For you the hours of labour do not flag ;  
 For you each evening hath its shining star,  
 And every Sabbath-day its golden-sun.' ”

“ Yes ! ” said the Solitary, with a smile  
 That seem'd to break from an expanding heart ;  
 “ The untutor'd bird may found, and so construct,  
 And with such soft materials line, her nest,  
 Fix'd in the centre of a prickly brake,  
 That the thorns wound her not ; they only guard  
 Powers, not unjustly liken'd to those gifts  
 Of happy instinct which the woodland bird  
 Shares with her species, Nature's grace sometimes  
 Upon the individual doth confer,  
 Among the higher creatures born and train'd,  
 To use of reason. And I own, that, tired  
 Of the ostentatious world — a swelling stage,  
 With empty actions and vain passions stuff'd,  
 And from the private struggles of mankind  
 Hoping for less than I could wish to hope,  
 Far less than once I trusted and believed —  
 I love to hear of those who, not contending  
 Nor summon'd to contend for virtue's prize,  
 Miss not the humbler good at which they aim ;  
 Bless'd with a kindly faculty to blunt  
 The edge of adverse circumstance, and turn  
 Into their contraries the petty plagues  
 And hindrances with which they stand beset.  
 In early youth, among my native hills,  
 I knew a Scottish peasant who possess'd  
 A few small crofts of stone-encumber'd ground ;  
 Masses of every shape and size, that lay  
 Scatter'd about beneath the mould'ring walls

Of a rough precipice ; and some, apart,  
In quarters unobnoxious to such chance,  
As if the moon had shower'd them down in spite :  
But he repined not. Though the plough was scared  
By these obstructions, ' Round the shady stones  
A fertilizing moisture,' said the swain,  
' Gathers, and is preserved ; and feeding dews  
And damps, through all the drougthy summer day  
From out their substance issuing, maintain  
Herbage that never fails : no grass springs up  
So green, so fresh, so plentiful as mine !'  
See, in this well-condition'd soul, a third  
To match with your good couple, that put forth  
Their homely graces on the mountain side.  
But thinly sown these natures ; rare, at least,  
The mutual aptitude of seed and soil  
That yields such kindly product. He, whose bed  
Perhaps yon loose sods cover, the poor pensioner  
Brought yesterday from our sequester'd dell  
Here to lie down in lasting quiet, he,  
If living now, could otherwise report  
Of rustic loneliness ; that gray-hair'd orphan —  
So call him, for humanity to him  
No parent was — could feelingly have told,  
In life, in death, what solitude can breed  
Of selfishness, and cruelty, and vice ;  
Or, if it breed not, hath not power to cure.  
But your compliance, sir, with our request  
My words too long have hinder'd."

Undeterr'd,  
Perhaps incited, rather, by these shocks,  
In no ungracious opposition, given  
To the confiding spirit of his own  
Experienced faith, the reverend Pastor said,  
Around him looking: "Where shall I begin?  
Who shall be first selected from my flock,



Gather'd together in their peaceful fold?"  
He paused, and having lifted up his eyes  
To the pure heaven, he cast them down again  
Upon the earth beneath his feet, and spake:—

“To a mysteriously consorted pair  
This place is consecrate; to death and life,  
And to the best affections that proceed  
From their conjunction. Consecrate to faith  
In Him who bled for man upon the cross,  
Hallow'd to revelation, and no less  
To reason's mandates, and the hopes divine  
Of pure imagination; above all,  
To charity and love, that have provided,  
Within these precincts, a capacious bed  
And receptacle, open to the good  
And evil, to the just and the unjust,  
In which they find an equal resting-place;  
Even as the multitude of kindred brooks  
And streams, whose murmur fills this hollow vale,  
Whether their course be turbulent or smooth,  
Their waters clear or sullied, all are lost  
Within the bosom of yon crystal lake,  
And end their journey in the same repose.

“And blest are they who sleep; and we that know,  
While in a spot like this we breathe and walk,  
That all beneath us by the wings are cover'd  
Of motherly humanity, outspread  
And gathering all within their tender shade,  
Though loath and slow to come. A battle-field,  
In stillness left, when slaughter is no more.  
With this compared is a strange spectacle!  
A rueful sight, the wild shore strewn with wrecks,  
And trod by people in afflicted quest  
Of friends and kindred, whom the angry sea  
Restores not to their prayers! Ah, who would think

That all the scatter'd subjects which compose  
Earth's melancholy vision through the space  
Of all her climes, — these wretched, these depraved,  
To virtue lost, insensible of peace,  
From the delights of charity cut off,  
To pity dead, the oppressor and the oppress'd, —  
Tyrants who utter the destroying word,  
And slaves who will consent to be destroy'd,  
Were of one species with the sheltered few,  
Who, with a dutiful and tender hand,  
Did lodge, in an appropriated spot,  
This file of infants ; some that never breathed  
The vital air ; and others, who, allow'd  
That privilege, did yet expire too soon,  
Or with too brief a warning, to admit  
Administration of the holy rite  
That lovingly consigns the babe to th' arms  
Of Jesus, and His everlasting care.  
These, that in trembling hope are laid apart ;  
And the besprinkled nursling, unrequired  
Till he begins to smile upon the breast  
That feeds him ; and the tott'ring little one,  
Taken from air and sunshine when the rose  
Of infancy first blooms upon his cheek ;  
The thinking, thoughtless schoolboy ; the bold youth,  
Of soul impetuous, and the bashful maid  
Smitten with all the promises of life  
Are opening round her ; those of middle age,  
Cast down while confident in strength they stand,  
Like pillars fix'd more firmly, as might seem,  
And more secure, by very weight of all  
That, for support, rests on them ; the decay'd  
And burthensome ; and, lastly, that poor few  
Whose light of reason is with age extinct ;  
The hopeful and the hopeless, first and last,  
The earliest summon'd and the longest spared, —  
Are here deposited, with tribute paid

Various ; but unto each some tribute paid,  
 As if, amid these peaceful hills and groves,  
 Society were touch'd with kind concern,  
 And gentle 'Nature grieved that one should die ;'  
 Or, if the change demanded no regret,  
 Observed the liberating stroke — and bless'd.  
 And whence that tribute — wherefore these regards ?  
 Not from the naked *heart* alone of man  
 (Though framed to high distinction upon earth  
 As the sole spring and fountain-head of tears,  
 His own peculiar utterance for distress  
 Or gladness) — No," the Philosophic Priest  
 Continued, "'tis not in the vital seat  
 Of feeling to produce them, without aid  
 ? From the pure soul, and the soul sublime and pure ;  
 With her two faculties of eye and ear, —  
 The one by which a creature, whom his sins  
 Have render'd prone, can upward look to heaven —  
 The other, that empowers him to perceive  
 The voice of Deity, on height and plain,  
 Whisp'ring those truths in stillness, which the Word  
 To the four quarters of the winds proclaims.  
 Not without such assistance could the use  
 Of these benign observances prevail.  
 Thus are they born, thus foster'd and maintain'd ;  
 And, by the care prospective of our wise  
 Forefathers, who, to guard against the shocks,  
 The fluctuation and decay of things  
 Embodied and establish'd these high truths  
 In solemn institutions : men convinced  
 That life is love and immortality,  
 The being one, and one the element.  
 There lies the channel and original bed,  
 ? From the beginning hollow'd and scoop'd  
 For man's affections — else betray'd and lost,  
 And swallow'd up 'mid deserts infinite!  
 This is the genuine course, the aim, and end

Of prescient reason ; all conclusions else  
 Are abject, vain, presumptuous, and perverse.  
 The faith partaking of those holy times,  
 Life, I repeat, is energy of love,  
 Divine or human, exercised in pain,  
 In strife, and tribulation, and ordain'd,  
 If so approved and sanctified, to pass,  
 Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy !”

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## BOOK VI.

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### THE CHURCHYARD AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

Poet's address to the State and Church of England — The Pastor not inferior to the ancient worthies of the Church — He begins his narratives with an instance of unrequited love — Anguish of mind subdued — And how — The lonely miner an instance of perseverance, which leads by contrast to an example of abused talents, irresolution and weakness — Solitary, applying this covertly to his own case, asks for an instance of some stranger whose dispositions may have led him to end his days here — Pastor, in answer, gives an account of the harmonising influence of solitude on two men of opposite principles, who had encountered agitations in public life — The rule by which peace may be obtained expressed — And where — Solitary hints at an overpowering Fatality — Answer of the Pastor — What subjects he will exclude from his narrative ; conversation upon this — Instance of an unamiable character, a female — And why given — Contrasted with this, a meek sufferer, from unguarded and betrayed love — Instance of heavier guilt — And its consequences to the offender — With this instance of a marriage contract broken is contrasted one of a widower, evincing his faithful affection towards his deceased wife by his care of their female children — Second marriage of widower prudential and happy.

HAIL to the crown by freedom shaped to gird  
An English sovereign's brow — and to the throne  
Whereon he sits ! whose deep foundations lie  
In veneration and the people's love ;  
Whose steps are equity, whose seat is law.  
Hail to the State of England ! And conjoin  
With this a salutation as devout,  
Made to the spiritual fabric of her Church ;  
Founded in truth ; by blood of martyrdom  
Cemented ; by the hands of wisdom rear'd  
In beauty of holiness, with order'd pomp,  
Decent and unreprieved. The voice, that greets  
The majesty of both, shall pray for both ;  
That mutually protected and sustain'd,  
They may endure as long as sea surrounds  
This favour'd land, or sunshine warms her soil.  
And oh, ye swelling hills, and spacious plains !  
Besprent from shore to shore with steeple-towers,  
And spires whose " silent finger points to heaven ;"  
Nor wanting, at wide intervals, the bulk  
Of ancient minster, lifted above the cloud  
Of the dense air which town or city breeds  
To intercept the sun's glad beams — ne'er may  
That true succession fail of English hearts,  
That can perceive, not less than heretofore,  
Our ancestors did feelingly perceive,  
What in those holy structures ye possess  
Of ornamental interest, and the charm  
Of pious sentiment diffused afar,  
And human charity, and social love.  
Thus never shall th' indignities of time  
Approach their reverend graces unopposed ;  
Nor shall the elements be free to hurt  
Their fair proportions ; nor the blinder rage  
Of bigot zeal madly to overturn ;  
And, if the desolating hand of war  
Spare them, they shall continue to bestow,



Upon the thronged abodes of busy men  
(Depraved, and ever prone to fill their minds  
Exclusively with transitory things)  
An air and mien of dignified pursuit;  
Of sweet civility on rustic wilds.  
The poet, fostering for his native land  
Such hope, entreats that servants may abound  
Of those pure altars worthy ; ministers  
Detach'd from pleasure, to the love of gain  
Superior, insusceptible of pride,  
And by ambition's longings undisturb'd ;  
Men whose delight is where their duty leads  
Or fixes them, whose least distinguish'd day  
Shines with some portion of that heavenly lustre  
Which makes the Sabbath lovely in the sight  
Of blessed angels pitying human cares.  
And, as on earth it is the doom of truth  
To be perpetually attack'd by foes  
Open or covert, be that priesthood still,  
For her defence, replenish'd with a band  
Of strenuous champions, in scholastic arts  
Thoroughly disciplined ; nor (if in course  
Of the revolving world's disturbance  
Cause should recur, which righteous Heaven avert !  
To meet such a trial) from their spiritual sires  
Degenerate ; who, constrain'd to wield the sword  
Of disputation, shrunk not, though assail'd  
With hostile din, and combating in sight ;  
Of angry umpires, partial and unjust ;  
And did, thereafter, bathe their hands in fire,  
So to declare the conscience satisfied :  
Nor for their bodies would accept release ;  
But, blessing God and praising Him, bequeath'd  
With their last breath, from out the smouldering flame  
The faith which they by diligence had earn'd,  
And through illuminating grace received,  
For their dear countrymen, and all mankind.

O high example, constancy divine !

Even such a man (inheriting the zeal  
And from the sanctity of elder times  
Not deviating,—a priest, the like of whom,  
If multiplied, and in their stations set,  
Would o'er the bosom of a joyful land  
Spread true religion and her genuine fruits)  
Before me stood that day ; on holy ground  
Fraught with the relics of mortality,  
Exalting tender themes, by just degrees  
To lofty raised ; and to the highest last ;  
The head and mighty paramount of truths ;  
Immortal life in never-fading worlds,  
For mortal creatures, conquer'd and secured.

That basis laid, those principles of faith  
Announced, as a preparatory act  
Of reverence to the spirit of the place,  
The Pastor cast his eyes upon the ground ;  
Not, as before, like one oppress'd with awe,  
But with a mild and social cheerfulness ;  
Then to the Solitary turn'd and spake :—

“ At morn or eve, in your retired domain,  
Perchance you not unfrequently have mark'd  
A visitor, intent upon the task  
Of prying, low and high, for herbs and flowers ;  
Too delicate employ, as would appear,  
For one who, though of drooping mien, had yet  
From nature's kindliness, received a frame  
Robust as ever rural labour bred.”

The Solitary answer'd :—“ Such a form  
Full well I recollect. We often cross'd  
Each other's path ; but, as th' intruder seem'd  
Fondly to prize the silence which he kept,

And I as willingly did cherish mine,  
 We met, and pass'd like shadows. I have heard,  
 From my good host, that he was crazed in brain  
 By unrequited love, and scaled the rocks,  
 Dived into caves, and pierced the matted woods,  
 In hope to find some virtuous herb of power  
 To cure his malady !”

The Vicar smiled :

“ Alas ! before to-morrow’s sun goes down,  
 His habitation will be here : for him  
 That open grave is destined.”

“ Died he then,  
 Of pain and grief ?” the Solitary asked.  
 “ Believe it not — oh, never can that be !”

“ He loved,” the Vicar answer’d, “ deeply loved,  
 Loved fondly, truly, fervently ; and pined  
 When he had told his loved, and sued in vain :  
 Rejected, yea, repell’d ; and, if with scorn  
 Upon the haughty maiden’s brow, ’tis but  
 A high-prized plume which female beauty wears.  
*That* he could brook, and glory in ; but when  
 The tidings came that she whom he had woo’d  
 Was wedded to another, and his heart  
 Was forced to rend away its only hope ;  
 Then, Pity could have scarcely found on earth  
 An object worthier of regard than he,  
 In the transition of that bitter hour.  
 Lost was she — lost ; nor could the sufferer say  
 That in the act of preference he had been  
 Unjustly dealt with ; but the maid was gone !  
 She whose dear name with unregarded sighs  
 He long had bless’d, whose image was preserved —  
 Shrined in his breast with fond idolatry,  
 Had vanish’d from his prospects and desires ;  
 Not by translation to the heavenly choir  
 Who have put off their mortal spoils — ah no !

She lives another's wishes to complete, —  
' Joy be their lot, and happiness, he cried, —  
' His lot and hers, as misery is mine !'

"Such was that strong concussion ; but the man,  
Who trembled, trunk and limbs, like some huge oak  
By a fierce tempest shaken, soon resumed  
The steadfast quiet natural to a mind  
Of composition gentle and sedate,  
And, in its movements, circumspect and slow.  
Of rustic parents bred, he had been train'd  
(So prompted their aspiring wish) to skill  
In numbers, and the sedentary art  
Of penmanship, — with pride profess'd, and taught  
By his endeavours in the mountain dales.  
Now, those sad tidings weighing on his heart,  
To books, and papers, and the studious desk,  
He stoutly re-address'd himself — resolved  
To quell his pain, and enter on the path  
Of old pursuits with keener appetite  
And closer industry. Of what ensued  
Within his soul no outward sign appear'd,  
Till a betraying sickliness was seen  
To tinge his cheek ; and through his frame it crept  
With slow mutation unconcealable ;  
Such universal change as autumn makes  
In the fair body of a leafy grove  
Discolour'd, then divested. 'Tis affirmed  
By poets skill'd in Natures secret ways  
That Love would not submit to be controll'd  
By mastery : and the good man lack'd not friends  
Who strove t'instil this truth into his mind,  
A mind in all heart-mysteries unversed.  
' Go to the hills' said one, ' remit a while  
This baneful diligence : at early morn  
Court the fresh air, explore the heaths and woods ;  
And, leaving it to others to foretell,

By calculations sage, the ebb and flow  
Of tides, and when the moon will be eclipsed,  
Do you, for your own benefit, construct  
A calendar of flow'rs, pluck'd as they blow  
Where health abides, and cheerfulness and peace.  
Th' attempt was made ' 'tis needless to report  
How hopelessly ; but innocence is strong,  
And an entire simplicity of mind  
A thing most sacred in the eye of Heaven,  
That opens for such sufferers, relief  
Within their souls, a fount of grace divine :  
And doth commend their weakness and disease  
To Nature's care, assisted in her office  
By all the elements that round her wait  
To generate, to preserve, and to restore ;  
And by her beautiful array of forms  
Shedding sweet influence from above, or pure  
Delight exhaling from the ground they tread."

" Impute it not t' impatience, if," exclaim'd  
The wanderer, " I infer that he was heal'd  
By perseverance in the course prescribed."

" You do not err : the powers, which had been lost  
By slow degrees, were gradually regain'd ;  
The fluttering nerves composed ; the beating heart  
In rest establish'd ; and the jarring thoughts  
To harmony restored. But yon dark mould  
Will cover him ; in height of strength — to earth  
Hastily smitten by a fever's force ;  
Yet not with stroke so sudden as refused  
Time to look back with tenderness on her  
Whom he had loved in passion, and to send  
Some farewell words ; and with those words, a prayer  
That, from his dying hand, she would accept  
Of his possessions, that which most he prized,



A book, upon the surface of whose leaves\*  
Some chosen plants, disposed with nicest care,  
In undecaying beauty were preserved.  
Mute register, to him, of time and place,  
And various fluctuations in the breast ;  
To her, a monument of faithful love  
Conquer'd, and in tranquillity retain'd.

“ Close to his destined habitation, lies  
One whose endeavours did at length achieve  
A victory less worthy of regard,  
Though marvellous in its kind. A place exists  
High in these mountains, that allured a band  
Of keen adventurers to unite their pains,  
In search of treasure there by nature formed,  
And there conceal'd: but they who tried were foil'd,  
And all desisted, all, save him alone ;  
Who, taking counsel of his own clear thoughts,  
And trusting only to his own weak hands,  
Urged unremittingly the stubborn work,  
Unseconded, uncountenanced ; then, as time  
Pass'd on, while still his lonely efforts found  
No recompence, derided ; and at length,  
By many pitied, as insane of mind ;  
By others dreaded as the luckless thrall  
Of subterranean spirits, feeding hope  
By various mockery of sight and sound ;  
Hope after hope, encouraged and destroy'd.

\* A kindred passage occurs in “Keble's Christian Year,” where, in allusion to the Church Service, and especially the Order of Prayers to be used at Sea, and their kindly influence in trouble and heaviness, he thus writes : —

“ Far, far away, the homesick seaman's hoard,  
Thy fragrant tokens live,  
Like flower-leaves in a precious volume stored  
To solace and relieve  
Some heart too weary of the restless world.”

But when the lord of seasons had matured  
The fruits of earth through space of twice ten years,  
The mountain's entrails offered to the view  
Of the old man, and to his trembling grasp,  
His bright, his long-deferr'd, his dear reward.  
Not with more transport did Columbus greet  
A world, his rich discovery ! But our swain,  
A very hero till his point was gain'd,  
Proved all unable to support the weight  
Of prosperous fortune. On the fields he look'd  
With an unsettled liberty of thought,  
Of schemes and wishes ; in the daylight walk'd  
Giddy and restless ; ever and anon  
Quaff'd in his gratitude immoderate cups ;  
And truly might be said to die of joy ! \*  
He vanish'd ; but conspicuous to this day  
The path remains that link'd his cottage-door  
To the mine's mouth ; a long and slanting track,  
Upon the rugged mountain's stony side  
Worn by his daily visits to and from  
The darksome centre of a constant hope.  
This vestige, neither force of beating rain,  
Nor the vicissitudes of frost and thaw,  
Shall cause to fade, till ages pass away ;  
And it is named, in memory of the event,  
The ' Path of Perseverance.' "

“ Thou, from whom

\* This incident of the miner pursuing his solitary labour for twenty years is true to the letter. He lived in Patterdale. In reviewing his story, the Poet remarks “one cannot but regret that such perseverance was not sustained by a worthier object.” It is singular that the strength of mind which so long supported him through his unrequited toil, should fail him when crowned with success. Numerous instances are recorded where a sudden influx of wealth has been the cause of derangement, and the unexpected shock of good fortune has been known even to produce idiotcy, but in these cases there had been little or no previous effort to obtain the prize.”

Man has his strength," exclaim'd the wanderer, "oh!  
Do thou direct it! To the virtuous grant  
The penetrative eye which can perceive  
In this blind world the guiding vein of hope,  
That, like this labourer, such may dig their way,  
'Unshaken, unseduced, untterrified;'  
Grant to the wise *his* firmness of resolve!"

"That prayer were not superfluous," said the Priest,  
"Amid the noblest relics, proudest dust,  
That Westminster, for Britain's glory, holds  
Within the bosom of her awful pile,  
Ambitiously collected. Yet the sigh,  
Which wafts that prayer to Heaven, is due to all,  
Wherever laid, who living fell below  
There virtue's humbler mark; a sigh of *pain*  
If to the opposite extreme they sank.  
How would you pity her who yonder rests;  
Aim, farther off; the pair, who here are laid;  
But, above all, that mixture of earth's mould  
Whom sight of this green hillock to my mind  
Recalls! *He* lived not till his locks were nipp'd  
By seasonable frost of age; nor died  
Before his temples, prematurely forced  
To mix the manly brown with silver gray,  
Give obvious instance of the sad effect  
Produced, when thoughtless folly hath usurp'd  
The natural crown which sage experience wears.  
Gay, volatile, ingenious, quick to learn,  
And prompt to exhibit all that he possess'd  
Or could perform; a zealous actor, hired  
Into the troop of mirth, a soldier — sworn  
Into the lists of giddy enterprise —  
Such was he; yet, as within his frame  
Two several souls alternately had lodged,  
Two sets of manners could the youth put on;  
And, fraught with antics as the Indian bird

That writhes and chatters in her wiry cage,  
Was graceful, when it pleased him, smooth and still  
As the mute swan that floats adown the stream,  
Or, on the waters of the unruffled lake,  
Anchors her placid beauty. Not a leaf,  
That flutters on the bough, more light than he ;  
And not a flower, that droops in the green shade,  
More winningly reserved ! If ye inquire  
How such consummate elegance was bred  
Amid these wilds ; a composition framed  
Of qualities so adverse — to diffuse,  
Where'er he moved, diversified delight ;  
A simple answer may suffice, even this, —  
'Twas Nature's will ; who sometimes undertakes,  
For the reproof of human vanity,  
Art to outstrip in her peculiar walk.  
Hence, for this favourite — lavishly endow'd  
With personal gifts, and bright instinctive wit,  
While both, embellishing each other, stood  
Yet farther recommended by the charm  
Of fine demeanour, and by dance and song,  
And skill in letters, every fancy shaped  
Fair expectations ; nor, when to the world's  
Capacious field went forth the adventurer, there  
Were he and his attainments overlooked,  
Or scantily rewarded ; but all hopes,  
Cherish'd for him, he suffer'd to depart,  
Like blighted buds ; or clouds that mimic'd land  
Before the sailor's eye ; or diamond drops  
That sparkling deck'd the morning grass ; or aught  
That *was* attractive — and hath ceased to be !  
Yet when the prodigal return'd the rites  
Of joyful greeting were on him bestow'd,  
Who by humiliation undeter'd,  
Sought for his weariness a place of rest  
Within his father's gates. Whence came he ? — clothed  
In tatter'd garb, from hovels, where abides

Necessity, the stationary host  
Of vagrant poverty ; from rifted barns,  
Where no one dwells but the wide-staring owl  
And the owl's prey ; none permanently house,  
But many harbour ; from these haunts, to which  
He had descended from the proud saloon,  
He came, the ghost of beauty and of health,  
The wreck of gaiety ! But soon revived  
In strength, in power refitted, he renew'd  
His suit to fortune ; and she smiled again  
Upon a fickle ingrate. Thrice he rose,  
Thrice sank as willingly. For he, whose nerves  
Were used to thrill with pleasure, while his voice  
Softly accompanied the tuneful harp,  
By the nice finger of fair ladies touch'd,  
In glittering halls, was able to derive  
Not less enjoyment from an abject choice.  
Who happier for the moment ? Who more blithe  
Than this fallen spirit ? in whose dreary holds  
His talents lending to exalt the freaks  
Of merry-making beggars, — now, provoked  
To laughter multiplied in louder peals  
By his malicious wit ; then, all enchain'd  
With mute astonishment, themselves to see  
In their own arts outdone, their fame eclipsed,  
As by the very presence of the fiend  
Who dictates and inspires illusive feats,  
For knavish purposes ! The city, too,  
(With shame I speak it,) to her guilty bowers  
Allured him, sunk so low in self-respect  
As there to linger, there to eat his bread,  
Hired minstrel of voluptuous blandishment ;  
Charming the air with skill of hand or voice,  
Listen who would, be wrought upon who might,  
Sincerely wretched hearts, or falsely gay.  
Truths I record to many known, for such  
The not unfrequent tenor of his boast,



In ears that relish'd the report ; but all  
Was from his parents happily conceal'd ;  
Who saw enough for blame and pitying love.  
They also were permitted to receive  
His last, repentant breath ; and closed his eyes,  
No more to open on that irksome world  
Where he had long existed in the state  
Of a young fowl beneath a mother hatch'd,  
Though from another sprung of different kind,  
Where he had lived, and could not cease to live,  
Distracted in propensity ; content  
With neither element of good or ill,  
And yet in both rejoicing ; man unblest ;  
Of contradictions infinite the slave,  
Till his deliverance, when mercy made him  
One with himself, and one with those who sleep."

"'Tis strange," observed the Solitary ; "strange  
It seems, and scarcely less than pitiful,  
That in a land where charity provides  
For all who can no longer feed themselves,  
A man like this should choose to bring his shame  
To the parental door ; and with his sighs  
Infect the air which he had freely breathed  
In happy infancy. He could not pine,  
Whene'er rejected, howsoe'er forlorn,  
Through lack of converse ; no, he must have found  
Abundant exercise for thought and speech  
In his dividual being, self-review'd,  
Self-catechised, self-punish'd. Some there are  
Who, drawing nearer their final home, and much  
And daily longing that the same were reach'd,  
Would rather shun than seek the fellowship  
Of kindred mould. Such haply here are laid."

"Yes," said the Priest, "The genius of our hills —  
Who seems, by these stupendous barriers cast

Round his domain, desirous not alone  
To keep his own, but also to exclude  
All other progeny — doth sometimes lure,  
Even by this studied depth of privacy,  
The unhappy alien hoping to obtain  
Concealment, or seduced by wish to find,  
In place from outward molestation free,  
Helps to eternal ease. Of many such  
Could I discourse ; but as their stay was brief,  
So their departure only left behind  
Fancies and loose conjectures. Other trace  
Survives, for worthy mention, of a pair  
Who, from the pressure of their several fates,  
Meeting as strangers, in a petty town,  
Whose blue roofs ornament a distant reach  
Of this far-winding vale, remain'd as friends  
True to their choice ; and gave their bones in trust  
To this loved cemetery, here to lodge,  
With unescutcheon'd privacy interr'd  
Far from the family vault. A chieftain, one  
By right of birth ; within whose spotless breast  
The fire of ancient Caledonia burn'd ;  
He, with the foremost whose impatience hail'd  
The Stuart, landing to resume, by force  
Of arms, the crown which bigotry had lost,  
Aroused his clan ; and, fighting at their head,  
With his brave sword endeavour'd to prevent  
Culloden's fatal overthrow. Escaped  
From that disastrous rout, to foreign shores  
He fled ; and when the lenient hand of time  
Those troubles had appeased, he sought and gain'd,  
For his obscured condition, an obscure  
Retreat within this nook of English ground.

“ The other, born in Britain's southern tract,  
Had fix'd his milder loyalty, and placed  
His gentler sentiments of love and hate

There, where they placed them who in conscience prized  
The new succession, as a line of kings  
Whose oath had virtue to protect the land  
Against the dire assaults of Papacy  
And arbitrary rule. But launch thy bark  
On the distemper'd flood of public life,  
And cause for most rare triumph will be thine,  
If, spite of keenest eye and steadiest hand,  
The stream, that bears thee forward, prove not, soon  
Or late, a perilous master. He, who oft,  
Under the battlements and stately trees  
That round his mansion cast a sober gloom,  
Had moralised on this, and other truths  
Of kindred import, pleased and satisfied,  
Was forced to vent his wisdom with a sigh  
Heaved from the heart in fortune's bitterness.  
When he had crush'd a plentiful estate  
By ruinous contest, to obtain a seat  
In Britain's senate. Fruitless was th' attempt;  
And while the uproar of that desperate strife  
Continued yet to vibrate on his ear,  
The vanquish'd Whig, beneath a *borrow'd* name  
(For the mere sound and echo of his own \*

\* The reference here is to two individuals who were by stress of fortune driven to take refuge in the obscure town of Hawkshead, near Esthwaite Water. Their stories were narrated to Wordsworth by the old dame with whom he lodged when a schoolboy and afterwards, for nearly ten years in all. The elder, a Jacobite, was of a high Scottish family, — the Drumonds. The Hanoverian Whig was Sir George Vandeput, a descendant of some Dutch follower of King William. His zeal was such, that in support of his party he ruined himself in a contest for the representation of Westminster, and retired to this secluded spot, for the sake of that obscurity which it no longer retains since it has become the fashion to visit the lakes. So much out of the way was this region considered about eighty or ninety years ago, that persons who had fled from justice were known to resort to it and even to make fresh forays from the place of their concealment. Particular mention is made of two brothers named

Haunted him with sensations of disgust  
 Which he was glad to lose,) slunk from the world  
 To the deep shade of these untravell'd wilds ;  
 In which the Scottish laird had long possess'd  
 An undisturb'd abode. Here, then, they met,  
 Two doughty champions ; flaming Jacobite  
 And sullen Hanoverian ! You might think  
 That losses and vexations less severe  
 Than those which had severally sustain'd, *they*  
 Would have inclined each to abate his zeal  
 For his ungrateful cause ; no, — I have heard  
 My reverend father tell that, 'mid the calm  
 Of that small town encountering thus, they fill'd,  
 Daily, its bowling-green with harmless strife ;  
 Plagued with uncharitable thoughts the church,  
 And vex'd the market-place. But in the breasts  
 Of these opponents gradually was wrought,  
 With little change of general sentiment,  
 Such change towards each other, that their days  
 By choice were spent in constant fellowship ;  
 And if, at times, they fretted with the yoke,  
 Those very bickerings made them love it more.

“ A favourite boundary to their lengthen'd walks  
 This churchyard was. And whether they had come  
 Treading their path in sympathy, and link'd  
 In social converse, or by some short space  
 Discreetly parted to preserve the peace,  
 One spirit seldom fail'd to extend its sway  
 Over both minds, when they a while had mark'd

Weston, who took up their abode at Old Brāthay. They were  
 highwaymen, and lived there for a considerable time undiscovered,  
 though they often disappeared as if on some mysterious errand.  
 Their horses were of a choice breed, and they were observed to be  
 curious in their saddles, housings, and accoutrements, which they  
 purchased at Kendal. It is currently reported that, in the end,  
 they were both taken and hanged.

The visible quiet of this holy ground,  
And breathed its soothing air — the spirit of hope  
And saintly magnanimity — that, spurning  
The field of selfish difference and dispute,  
And every care which transitory things,  
Earth, and the kingdoms of the earth create,  
Doth, by a rapture of forgetfulness,  
Preclude forgiveness, from the praise debarr'd  
Which else the Christian virtue might have claim'd.  
There live who yet remember here to have seen  
Their courtly figures, seated on the stump  
Of an old yew, their favourite resting-place.  
But, as the remnant of the long-lived tree  
Was disappearing by a swift decay,  
They, with joint care, determined to erect,  
Upon its site, a dial, which should stand  
For public use ; and also might survive  
As their own private monument : for this  
Was the particular spot in which they wish'd  
(And Heaven was pleased to accomplish the desire)  
That, undivided, their remains should lie.  
So, where the moulder'd tree had stood, was raised  
Yon structure, framing, with the ascent of steps  
That to the decorated pillar lead,  
A work of art, more sumptuous, as might seem  
Than suits this place ; yet built in no proud scorn  
Of rustic homeliness ; they only aim'd  
To insure for it respectful guardianship,  
Around the margin of the plate, whereon  
The shadow falls, to note the stealthy hours,  
Winds an inscriptive legend." At these words  
Thither we turned ; and gather'd as we read,  
The appropriate sense, in Latin numbers couch'd :—  
" Time flies ; it is his melancholy task  
To bring, and bear away, delusive hopes,  
And reproduce the troubles he destroys.  
But, while his blindness thus is occupied,



Discerning mortal, do thou serve the will  
Of time's eternal Master, and that peace,  
Which the world wants, shall be for thee confirm'd !”

“Smooth verse, inspir'd by no unletter'd muse,”  
Exclaim'd the sceptic, “and the strain of thought  
Accords with Nature's language ; the soft voice  
Of yon white torrent falling down the rocks  
Speaks, less distinctly, to the same effect.  
If, then, their blended influence be not lost  
Upon our hearts — not wholly lost, I grant,  
Even upon mine — the more are we required  
To feel for those among our fellow-men,  
Who, offering no obeisance to the world,  
Are yet made desperate by ‘too quick a sense  
Of constant infelicity’ — cut off  
From peace, like exiles on some barren rock,  
Their life's appointed prison ; not more free  
Than sentinels, between two armies set.  
With nothing better, in the chill night air,  
Than their own thoughts to comfort them. Say why  
That ancient story of Prometheus chain'd ?  
The vulture — th' inexhaustible repast  
Drawn from his vitals. Say what meant the woes  
By Tantalus entail'd upon his race,  
And the dark sorrows of the line of Thebes.  
Fictions in form, but in their substance truths —  
Tremendous truths ! familiar to the men  
Of long-past times ; not obsolete in ours.  
Exchange the shepherd's frock of native gray  
For robes with regal tinged ! convert  
The crook into a sceptre ; give the pomp  
Of circumstance, and here the tragic muse  
Shall find apt subjects for her highest art,  
Amid the groves, beneath the shadowy hills,  
The generations are prepared ; the pangs,  
The internal pangs are ready ; the dread strife

Of poor humanity's afflicted will  
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

"Though," said the Priest, "in answer, "these be terms  
Which a divine philosophy rejects,  
We, whose establish'd and unfailing trust  
Is in controlling Providence, admit  
That through all stations human life abounds  
With mysteries; for if Faith were left untried,  
How could the might that lurks within her then  
Be shewn? her glorious excellence — that ranks  
Among the first of powers and virtues — proved?  
Our system is not fashion'd to preclude  
That sympathy which you for others ask;  
And I could tell, not travelling for my theme  
Beyond the limits of these humble graves,  
Of strange disasters; but I pass them by,  
Loath to disturb what Heaven hath hush'd in peace.  
Still less, far less, am I inclined to treat  
Of man degraded in his Maker's sight  
By the deformities of brutish vice:  
For, though from these materials might be framed  
Harsh portraiture, in which a vulgar face  
And a coarse outside of repulsive life  
And unaffected manners may at once  
Be recognized by all" — "Ah! do not think,"  
The Wanderer somewhat eagerly exclaim'd,  
"Wish could be ours that you, for such poor gain  
(Gain shall I call it? — gain of what? — for whom?)  
Should breathe a word tending to violate  
Your own pure spirit. Not a step we look for  
In slight of that forbearance and reserve  
Which common human-heartedness inspires,  
And mortal ignorance and frailty claim,  
Upon this sacred ground, if nowhere else."

"True," said the Solitary; "be it far

From us to infringe the laws of charity.  
Let judgment here in mercy be pronounced ;  
This, self-respecting Nature prompts, and this  
Wisdom enjoins ; but if the thing we seek  
Be genuine knowledge, bear we then in mind  
How, from his lofty throne, the sun can fling  
Colours as bright on exhalations bred  
By weedy pool or pestilential swamp,  
As by the rivulet, sparkling where it runs,  
Or the pellucid lake."

" Small risk," said I,  
" Of such illusion do we here incur ;  
Temptation here is none to exceed the truth !  
No evidence appears that they who rest  
Within this ground, were covetous of praise,  
Or of remembrance e'en, deserved or not.  
Green is the churchyard, beautiful and green,  
Ridge rising gently by the side of ridge ;  
A heaving surface, almost wholly free  
From interruption of sepulchral stones,  
And mantled o'er with aboriginal turf  
And everlasting flowers. These dalesmen trust  
The lingering gleam of their departed lives  
To oral records and the silent heart :  
Depository faithful and more kind  
Than fondest epitaphs : for, if it fail,  
What boots the sculptur'd tomb ! And who can blame,  
Who rather would not envy, men that feel  
This mutual confidence ; if from such a source  
The practice flow, — if thence, or from a deep  
And general humility in death ?  
Nor should I much condemn it, if it spring  
From disregard of time's destructive power,  
As only capable to prey on things  
Of earth, and human nature's mortal part.

" Yet, in less simple districts, where we see

Stone lift its forehead emulous of stone  
In courting notice, and the ground all paved  
With commendations of departed worth,  
Reading, where'er we turn, of innocent lives,  
Of each domestic charity fulfill'd,  
And sufferings meekly borne — I, for my part,  
Though with the silence pleased which here prevails,  
Among those fair recitals also range,  
Soothed by the natural spirit which they breathe.  
And, in the centre of a world whose soil  
Is rank with all unkindness, compass'd round  
With such memorials, I have sometimes felt  
That 'twas no momentary happiness  
To have *one* enclosure where the voice that speaks  
In envy or detraction is not heard ;  
Which malice may not enter ; where the trace  
Of evil inclinations is unknown ;  
Where love and piety tenderly unite  
With resignation ; and no jarring tone  
Intrudes, the peaceful concert to disturb  
Of amity and gratitude."

"Thus sanction'd,  
The Pastor said, "I willingly confine  
My narrative to subjects that excite  
Feelings with these accordant ; love, esteem,  
And admiration ; lifting up a veil,  
A sunbeam introducing among hearts  
Retired and covert ; so that ye shall have  
Clear images before your gladden'd eyes  
Of nature's unambitious underwood,  
And flowers that prosper in the shade. And when  
I speak of such among my flock as swerved  
Or fell, those only will I single out  
Upon whose lapse, or error, something more  
Than brotherly forgiveness may attend ;  
To such will we restrict our notice, else  
Better my tongue were mute. And yet there are,

I feel, good reasons why we should not leave  
Wholly untraced a more forbidding way.  
For strength to persevere and to support,  
And energy to conquer and repel,  
These elements of virtue, that declare  
The native grandeur of the human soul,  
Are oftentimes not unprofitably shewn  
In the perverseness of a selfish course :  
Truth every day exemplified, no less  
In the gray cottage by the murmuring stream  
Than the fantastic conqueror's roving camp,  
Or in the factious senate, uappall'd,  
While merciless proscription ebbs and flows.  
There," said the Vicar, pointing as he spake,  
" A woman rests in peace ; surpass'd by few  
In power of mind and eloquent discourse.  
Tall was her stature, her complexion dark  
And saturnine ; her port erect, her head  
Not absolutely raised, as if to hold  
Converse with heaven, nor yet depress'd tow'rds earth,  
But in projection carried, as she walk'd  
For ever musing. Sunken were her eyes :  
Wrinkled and furrow'd with habitual thought  
Was her broad forehead ; like the brow of one  
Whose visual nerve shrinks from a painful glare  
Of overpowering light.—While yet a child,  
She, 'mid the humble flow'rets of the vale,  
Tower'd like the imperial thistle, not unfurnish'd  
With its appropriate grace, yet rather framed  
To be admired, than coveted and loved.  
Even at that age she ruled as sovereign queen  
Among her playmates ; else their simple sports  
Had wanted power to occupy a mind  
Held in subjection by a strong control  
Of studious application, self-imposed.  
Books were her creditors ; to them she paid,  
With eager anxious eagerness, the hours



Which they exacted ; were it time allow'd,  
Or seized upon by stealth, or fairly won,  
By stretch of industry from other tasks.  
Oh ! pang of sorrowful regret for them  
Whom, in their youth, sweet study has enthrall'd,  
That they have lived for harsher servitude,  
Whether in soul, in body, or estate !  
Such doom was hers ; yet nothing could subdue  
Her keen desire for knowledge, or efface  
Those brighter images, by books impress'd  
Upon her memory ; faithfully as stars  
That occupy their places, — and, though oft  
Hidden by clouds, and oft bedimm'd by haze,  
Are not to be extinguish'd or impair'd.

“ Two passions, both degenerate, for they both  
Began in honour, gradually obtain'd  
Rule over her, and vex'd her daily life ;  
An unrelenting, avaricious thrift,  
And a strange thralldom of maternal love,  
And held her spirit in its own despote,  
Bound by vexation, and regret, and scorn,  
Constrain'd forgiveness, and relenting vows,  
And tears, in pride suppress'd, in shame conceal'd,  
To a poor dissolute son, her only child.  
Her wedded days had open'd with mishap,  
Whence dire dependence. What could she perform  
To shake the burden off ? Ah ! there she felt  
Indignantly the weakness of her sex,  
Th' injustice of her low estate. She mused ;  
Resolved ; adhered to her resolve ; her heart  
Closed by degrees to charity ; and, thence  
Expecting not Heaven's blessing, placed her trust  
In ceaseless pains and parsimonious care,  
Which got and sternly hoarded each day's gain.

“ Thus all was re-established, and a pile

Constructed that sufficed for every end,  
 Save the content of the builder's mind ; */want*  
 A mind by nature indisposed to aught  
 So placid, so inactive, as content ;  
 A mind intolerant of lasting peace,  
 And cherishing the pang which it deplored.  
 Dread life of conflict ! which I oft compared  
 To the agitation of a brook that runs  
 Down rocky mountains — buried now and lost  
 In silent pools, unfathomably deep ; —  
 Now, in a moment, starting forth again  
 With violence, and proud of its escape ;  
 Until it sink once more, by slow degrees,  
 Or instantly, into as dark repose.

“ A sudden illness seized her in the strength  
 Of life's autumnal season. Shall I tell  
 How on her bed of death the matron lay,  
 To Providence submissive, so she thought ;  
 But fretted, vex'd, and wrought upon — almost  
 To anger, by the malady that griped  
 Her prostrate frame with unrelaxing power,  
 As the fierce eagle fastens on the lamb.  
 She pray'd, she moan'd — her husband's sister watch'd  
 Her dreary pillow, waited on her needs ;  
 And yet the very sound of that kind foot  
 Was anguish to her ears ! ‘ And must she rule,’  
 Thus was the dying woman heard to say  
 In bitterness, ‘ and must she rule and reign,  
 Sole mistress of this house, when I am gone ?  
 Sit by my fire — possess what I possess'd —  
 Tend what I tended, calling it her own !’  
 Enough — I fear, too much. Of nobler feeling  
 Take this example. One autumnal eve,  
 While she was yet in prime of health and strength,  
 I well remember, while I pass'd her door,  
 Musing with loitering step, and upward eye

Turn'd tow'ards the planet Jupiter, that hung  
Above the centre of the vale, a voice  
Roused me — her voice ; it said, ' That glorious star  
In its untroubled element, will shine  
As now it shines, when we are laid in earth  
And safe from all our sorrows.' She is safe,  
And her uncharitable acts, I trust,  
And harsh unkindnesses, are all forgiven,  
Though in this vale remember'd with deep awe ! ”

The vicar paused ; and tow'ards a seat advanced,  
A long stone seat, framed in the churchyard wall ;  
Part under shady sycamore, and part  
Offering a place of rest, in pleasant sunshine  
Even as many suit the comers, old or young,  
Who seek the house of worship, where the bells  
Yet ring with all their voices, or before  
The last hath ceased its solitary knell.  
To this commodious resting-place he led ;  
Where, by his side, we all sate down ; and there  
His office, uninvited, he resumed : —

“ As, on a sunny bank, a tender lamb  
Lurks in safe shelter from the winds of March,  
Screen'd by its parent, so that little mound  
Lies guarded by its neighbour ; the small heap  
Speaks for itself ; an infant there doth rest,  
The sheltering hillock is the mother's grave.  
If mild discourse, and manners that conferr'd  
A natural dignity on humblest rank ;  
If gladsome spirits, and benignant looks,  
That for a face not beautiful did more  
Than beauty for the fairest face can do ;  
And if religious tenderness of heart,  
Grieving for sin, and penitential tears  
Shed when the clouds had gather'd and disstain'd  
The spotless ether of a maiden life ;

If these may make a hallow'd spot of earth  
More holy in the sight of God or man ;  
Then, on that mould, a sanctity shall brood  
Till the stars sicken at the day of doom.

“ Ah ! what a warning for a thoughtless man,  
Could field or grove, or any spot of earth,  
Shew to his eye an image of the pangs  
Which it hath witness'd — render back an echo  
Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod ! \*  
There, by her innocent baby's precious grave,  
Yea, doubtless on the turf that roofs her own,  
The mother oft was seen to stand, or kneel  
In the broad day, a weeping Magdalene.  
Now she is not ; the swelling turf reports  
Of the fresh flower, but of poor Ellen's tears

\* In the autumn of 1836, the amiable and excellent Justice Coleridge and his family enjoyed a visit of six weeks at Foxhow, the residence of Dr. Arnold. His memoranda at that time are communicated in the ‘Memoirs’ to which we are indebted for so many interesting details. Under date of October 14, after describing the preparations for an excursion to Easedale, he writes of Wordsworth, who accompanied them : “—— he *trudging* before, with his green gauze shade over his eyes, and in his plaid jacket and waistcoat. First he turned aside at a little farmhouse, and took us into a field, to look down on the tumbling stream which bounded it, and which we saw precipitated at a distance, in a broad white sheet, from the mountain. A beautiful water-break of the same stream was before us at our feet, and he noticed the connection which it formed in the landscape with the distant waterfall. Then as he mused for an instant, he said, ‘*I have often thought what a solemn thing it would be, if we could have brought to our mind at once, all the scenes of distress and misery which any spot however calm and beautiful before us, has been witness to since the beginning.*’ That water-break, with the glassy, quiet pool beneath it, that looks so lovely, and presents no image to the mind but of peace, — there I remember, the only son of his father, a poor man who lived yonder, was drowned. He missed him, came to search and saw his body dead in the pool.’”

Is silent ; nor is any vestige left  
Upon the path, of her mournful tread ;  
Nor of that peace with which she once had moved  
In virgin fearlessness, a step that seem'd  
Caught from the pressure of elastic turf  
Upon the mountains wet with morning dew,  
In the prime hour of sweetest scents and airs.  
Serious and thoughtful was her mind ; and yet,  
By reconcilment exquisite and rare,  
The form, port, motions of this cottage girl,  
Were such as might have quicken'd and inspired  
A Titian's hand, address'd to picture forth  
Oread or Dryad glancing through the shade  
When first the hunter's startling horn is heard  
Upon the golden hills. A spreading elm  
Stands in our valley, called 'the Joyful Tree ;'  
An elm distinguish'd by that festive name,  
From dateless usage which our peasants hold  
Of giving welcome to the first of May  
By dances round its trunk. And if the sky  
Permit, like honours, dance and song, are paid  
To the Twelfth Night, beneath the frosty stars  
Or the clear moon. The queen of these gay sports,  
If not in beauty, yet in sprightly air,  
Was hapless Ellen. Not one touch'd the ground  
So deftly, and the nicest maiden's locks  
Less gracefully were braided ; but this praise,  
Methinks, would better suit another place.

"She loved, and fondly deem'd herself beloved.  
The road is dim, the current unperceived,  
The weakness painful and most pitiful,  
By which a virtuous woman, in pure youth,  
May be delivered to distress and shame.  
Such fate was hers. The last time Ellen danced  
Among her equals round 'the Joyful Tree,'  
She bore a secret burthen ; and full soon



Was left to tremble for a breaking vow, —  
Then, to bewail a sternly-broken vow,  
Alone, within her widow'd mother's house.  
It was the season sweet of budding leaves,  
Of days advancing tow'rds their utmost length,  
And small birds singing to their happy mates.  
Wild is the music of the autumnal wind  
Among the faded woods : but these blithe notes  
Strike the deserted to the heart : I speak  
Of what I know, and what we feel within.  
Beside the cottage in which Ellen dwelt  
Stands a tall ash-tree ; to whose topmost twig  
A thrush resorts, and annually chants,  
At morn and evening, from that naked perch,  
While all the undergrove is thick with leaves,  
A time-beguiling ditty, for delight  
Of his fond partner, silent in the nest.  
'Ah ! why,' said Ellen, sighing to herself,  
'Why do not words, and kiss, and solemn pledge,  
And nature that is kind in woman's breast,  
And reason that in man is wise and good,  
And fear of Him who is a righteous judge ;  
Why do not these prevail for human life,  
To keep two hearts together that began  
Their spring-time with one love, and that have need  
Of mutual pity and forgiveness, sweet  
To grant, or be received, while that poor bird  
Oh, come and hear him ! Thou who hast to me  
Been faithless, hear him, though a lonely creature,  
One of God's simple children that ye/ know not *yet*  
The universal Parent, how he sings  
As if he wish'd the firmament of heaven  
Should listen, and give back to him the voice  
Of his triumphant constancy and love ;  
The proclamation that he makes, how far  
His darkness doth transcend our fickle light !'

“Such was the tender passage, not by me  
Repeated without loss of simple phrase,  
Which I perused, even as the words had been  
Committed by forsaken Ellen’s hand  
To the blank margin of a valentine,  
Bedropp’d with tears. ’Twill please you to be told  
That, studiously withdrawing from the eye  
Of all companionship, the sufferer yet  
In lonely reading found a meek resource.  
How thankful for the warmth of summer days,  
And their long twilight!—friendly to that stealth  
With which she slipp’d into the cottage barn.  
And found a secret oratory there ;  
Or, in the garden, pored upon her book  
By the last lingering help of open sky,  
Till the dark night dismiss’d her to her bed.  
Thus did a waking fancy sometimes lose  
The unconquerable pang of despised love.

“A kindlier passion open’d on her soul  
When that poor child was born. Upon its face  
She look’d as on a pure and spotless gift  
Of unexpected promise, where a grief  
Of dread was all that had been thought of—joy  
Far sweeter than bewilder’d traveller feels  
Upon a perilous waste, where all night long  
Through darkness he hath toil’d and fearful storm,  
When he beholds the first pale speck serene  
Of day-spring in the gloomy east reveal’d,  
And greets it with thanksgiving. ‘Till this hour,’  
Thus in her mother’s hearing Ellen spake,  
‘There was a stony region in my heart ;  
But He, at whose command the parched rock  
Was smitten, and pour’d forth a quenching stream,  
Hath soften’d that obduracy, and made  
Unlook’d for gladness in the desert place,  
To save the perishing ; and, henceforth, I look

Upon the light with cheerfulness, for thee  
 My infant ! and for that good mother dear,  
 Who bore me, and hath pray'd for me in vain ;  
 Yet not in vain, — it shall not be in vain.'  
 She spake, nor was the assurance unfulfill'd,  
 And if heart-rending thoughts would oft return,  
 They stay'd not long. The blameless infant grew ;  
 The child whom Ellen and her mother loved  
 They soon were proud of ; tended it and nursed,  
 A soothing comforter, although forlorn :  
 Like a poor singing-bird from distant lands ;  
 Or a choice shrub, which he who passes by  
 With vacant mind, not seldom may observe  
 Fair flowering in a thinly-peopled house,  
 Whose window, somewhat sadly, it adorns.

“ Through four months' space the infant drew its food  
 From the maternal breast : then scruples rose ;  
 Thoughts, which the rich are free from, came and cross'd  
 The sweet affection. She no more could bear  
 By her offence to lay a twofold weight  
 On a kind parent willing to forget  
 Their slender means ; so, to that parent's care  
 Trusting her child, she left their common home,  
 And with contented spirit undertook  
 A foster-mother's office.

“ 'Tis, perchance,  
 Unknown to you that in these simple vales  
 The natural feeling of equality  
 Is by domestic service unimpair'd ;  
 Yet, though such service be, with us, removed  
 From sense of degradation, not the less  
 The ungentle mind can easily find means  
 To impose severe restraints and laws unjust :  
 Which hapless Ellen now was doom'd to feel.

“ In selfish blindness, for I will not say

In naked and deliberate cruelty,  
The pair, whose infant she was bound to nurse,  
Forbad her all communion with her own.  
They urged that such meeting would disturb  
The mother's mind, distract her thoughts, and thus  
Unfit her for her duty ; in which dread,  
Week after week, the mandate was enforced,  
So near ! yet not allow'd upon that sight  
To fix her eyes — alas ! 'twas hard to bear !  
But worse affliction must be borne — far worse !  
For 'tis Heaven's will, that, after a disease  
Begun and ended within three days' space,  
Her child should die ; as Ellen now exclaim'd  
Her own, deserted child ! Once, only once,  
She saw it in that mortal malady :  
And on the burial-day, could scarcely gain  
Permission to attend its obsequies.  
She reach'd the house — last of the funeral train ;  
And some one, as she enter'd, having chanced  
To urge unthinkingly their prompt departure,  
' Nay,' said she, with commanding look, a spirit  
Of anger never seen in her before,  
' Nay, ye must wait my time !' and down she sate,  
And by the unclosed coffin kept her seat,  
Weeping and looking, looking on and weeping  
Upon the last sweet slumber of her child,  
Until at length her soul was satisfied.

“ You see the infant's grave ; and to this spot  
The mother, oft as she was sent abroad,  
And whatsoe'er the errand, urged her steps ;  
Hither she came ; and here she stood, or knelt  
In the broad day — a rueful Magdalene !  
So call her ; for not only she bewail'd  
A mother's loss, but mourn'd in bitterness  
Her own transgression ; penitent sincere  
As ever raised to Heaven a streaming eye.

At length the parents of the foster-child,  
Nothing that in despite of their commands,  
She still renew'd, and could not but not renew,  
Those visitations, ceased to send her forth ;  
Or, to the narrow garden's bounds confined.  
I fail'd not to remind them that they err'd ;  
For Holy Nature might not thus be cross'd,  
Thus wrong'd in woman's breast : in vain I pleaded :  
But the green stalk of Ellen's life was snapp'd,  
And the flower droop'd ; as every one could see,  
It hung its head in mortal languishment.  
Aided by this appearance, I at length  
Prevail'd ; and, from those bonds released, she went  
Home to her mother's house. The youth was fled ;  
The rash betrayer could not face the shame  
Or sorrow which his senseless guilt had caused ;  
And little would his presence, or proof given  
Of a relenting soul, have now avail'd ;  
For, like a shadow, he was pass'd away  
From Ellen's thoughts ; had perish'd to her mind  
For all concerns of fear, or hope, or love,  
Save only those which to their common shame,  
And to his moral being, appertain'd.  
Hope from that quarter would, I know, have brought  
A heavenly comfort : there she recognised  
An unrelaxing bond, a mutual need ;  
There, and, as seem'd, there only. She had raised,  
Her fond maternal heart had built, a nest  
In blindness all two near the river's edge ;  
That work a summer flood with hasty swell  
Had swept away, and now her spirit long'd  
For its last flight to heaven's security.  
The bodily frame was wasted day by day ;  
Meanwhile, relinquishing all other cares,  
Her mind she strictly tutor'd to find peace  
And pleasure in endurance. Much she thought,  
And much she read, and brooded feelingly,



Upon her own unworthiness. To me,  
As to a spiritual comforter and friend,  
Her heart she open'd, and no pains were spared  
To mitigate, as gently as I could,  
The sting of self-reproach with healing words.  
Meek saint — through patience glorified on earth !  
In whom, as by her lonely hearth she sat,  
The ghastly face of cold decay put on  
A sun-like beauty, and appeared divine !  
May I not mention, that, within these walls,  
In due observance of her pious wish,  
The congregation join'd with me in prayer  
For her soul's good ? Nor was that office vain.  
Much did she suffer ; but if any friend,  
Beholding her condition, at the sight  
Gave way to words of pity or complaint,  
She still'd them with a prompt reproof, and said :  
' He who afflicts me knows what I can bear,  
And when I fail, and can endure no more,  
Will mercifully take me to himself.'  
So, through the cloud of death her spirit pass'd  
Into that pure and unknown world of love  
Where injury cannot come : and here is laid  
The mortal body by her infant's side."

The Vicar ceased, and downcast looks made known  
That each had listen'd with his inmost heart.  
For me, the emotion scarcely was less strong  
Or less benign than that which I had felt  
When, seated by my venerable friend,  
Beneath those shady elms, from him I heard  
The story that retraced the slow decline  
Of Margaret sinking on the lonely heath,  
With the neglected house in which she dwelt.  
I noted that the Solitary's cheek  
Confess'd the power of nature. Pleased, though sad,  
More pleased than sad, the gray-hair'd Wand'rer sate,

Thanks to his pure imaginative soul,  
Capacious and serene : his blameless life,  
His knowledge, wisdom, love of truth, and love  
Of human kind ! He was it who first broke  
The pensive silence, saying, " Blest are they  
Whose sorrow rather is to suffer wrong  
Than to do wrong, although themselves have err'd.  
This tale gives proof that Heaven most gently deals  
With such in their affliction. Ellen's fate,  
Her tender spirit, and her contrite heart,  
Call to my mind dark hints which I have heard  
Of one who died within this vale, by doom  
Heavier, as his offence was heavier far.  
Where, sir, I pray you, where are laid the bones  
Of Wilfred Armathwaite ? "

The Vicar answer'd : —

" In that green nook, close by the churchyard wall,  
Beneath yon hawthorn, planted by myself  
In memory and for warning, and in sign  
Of sweetness, where dire anguish had been known,  
Of reconciliation after deep offence,  
There doth he lie. In this, his native vale,  
He own'd and till'd a little plot of land ;  
Here, with his consort and his children saw,  
Days that were seldom cross'd by petty strife,  
Years safe from large misfortune ; and maintain'd  
That course which minds, of insight not too keen,  
Might look on with entire complacency.  
Yet, in himself and near him, there were faults  
At work to undermine his happy state  
By sure, though tardy, progress. Active, prompt,  
And lively was his housewife ; in the vale  
None more industrious ; but her industry,  
Ill-judged, full oft, and specious, tended more  
To splendid neatness, to a showy, trim,  
And overlabour'd purity of house,

Than to substantial thrift. He, on his part,  
Generous and easy-minded, was not free  
From carelessness ; and thus, in lapse of time,  
These joint infirmities induced decay  
Of wordly substance ; and distress of mind,  
That to a thoughtful man was hard to shun,  
And which he could not cure. A blooming girl  
Served in the house, a favourite that had grown  
Beneath his eye, encouraged by his care.  
Poor now in tranquil pleasure, he gave way  
To thoughts of troubled pleasure ; he became  
A lawless suitor to the maid ; and she  
Yielded unworthily. ' Unhappy man !  
That which he had been weak enough to do  
Was misery in remembrance ; he was stung,  
Stung by his inward thoughts, and by the smiles  
Of wife and children stung to agony.  
Wretched at home, he gain'd no peace abroad ;  
Ranged through the mountains, slept upon the earth,  
Ask'd comfort of the open air, and found  
No quiet in the darkness of the night,  
No pleasure in the beauty of the day.  
His flock he slighted ; his paternal fields  
Became a clog to him, whose spirit wish'd  
To fly — but whither ? And this gracious church,  
That wears a look so full of peace and hope  
And love, benignant mother of the vale,  
How fair amid her brood of cottages !  
She was to him a sickness and reproach.  
Much to the last remain'd unknown ; but this  
Is sure, that through remorse and grief he died ;  
Though pitied among men, absolved by God,  
He could not find forgiveness in himself ;  
Nor could endure the weight of his own shame.

“ Here rests a mother. But from her I turn,  
And from her grave. Behold — upon that ridge,

Which, stretching boldly from the mountain-side,  
Carries into the centre of the vale  
Its rocks and woods — the cottage where she dwelt ;  
And where yet dwells her faithful partner, left  
(Full eight years past) the solitary prop  
Of many helpless children. I begin  
With words which might be prelude to a tale  
Of sorrow and dejection ; but I feel  
No sadness, when I think of what mine eyes  
See daily in that happy family.  
Bright garland form they for the pensive brow  
Of their undrooping father's widowhood.  
Those six fair daughters, budding yet — not one,  
Not one of all the band, a full-blown flower.  
Depress'd and desolate of soul, as once  
That father was, and fill'd with anxious fear,  
Now by experience taught, he stands assured,  
That God, who takes away, yet takes not half  
Of what he seems to take ; or gives it back,  
Not to our prayer, but far beyond our prayer ;  
He gives it — the boon produce of a soil  
Which our endeavours have refused to till,  
And hope hath never water'd. The abode  
Whose grateful owner can attest these truths,  
Even were the object nearer to our sight,  
Would seem in no distinction to surpass  
The rudest habitations. Ye might think  
That it had sprung self-raised from earth, or grown  
Out of the living rock, to be adorn'd  
By nature only ; but, if thither led,  
Ye would discover, then, a studious work  
Of many fancies prompting many hands.  
Brought from the woods, the honeysuckle twines  
Around the porch, and seems, in that trim place  
A plant no longer wild ; the cultured rose  
There blooms, strong in health, and will be soon  
Roof-high ; the wild pink crowns the garden wall,

And with the flowers are intermingled stones  
Sparry and bright, the scatterings of the hills.  
These ornaments that fade not with the year,  
A hardy girl continues to provide ;  
Who, mounting fearlessly the rocky heights,  
Her father's prompt attendant, does for him  
All that a boy could do — but with delight  
More keen, and prouder daring ; yet hath she  
Within the garden, like the rest, a bed  
For her own flowers and favourite herbs — a space  
By sacred charter holden, for her use.  
These, and whatever else the garden bears  
Of fruit or flower, permission ask'd or not,  
I freely gather ; and my leisure draws  
A not unfrequent pastime from the sight  
Of the bees murmuring round their shelter'd hives  
In that enclosure ! while the mountain rill,  
That sparkling thrids the rocks, attunes his voice  
To the pure course of human life, which there  
Flows on in solitude from year to year.  
But at the closing in of night, then most  
This dwelling charms me. Cover'd by the gloom,  
Then, in my walks, I oftentimes stop short  
(Who could refrain ?) and feed by stealth my sight  
With prospect of the company within,  
Laid open through the blazing window ; — there  
I see the eldest daughter at her wheel  
Spinning amain, as if to overtake  
The never-halting time ; or, in her turn,  
Teaching some novice of the sisterhood  
The skill in this, or other household work,  
Which, from her father's honour'd hand, herself,  
While she was yet a little one, had learn'd.  
Mild man ! he is not gay, but they are gay,  
And the whole house seems fill'd with gaiety.  
Thrice happy, then, the mother may be deem'd,  
The wife, who rests beneath that turf, from which



I turn'd, that ye in mind might witness where  
And how her spirit yet survives on earth?

“The next three ridges — those upon the left —  
By close connexion with our present thought,  
Tempt me to add, in praise of humble worth,  
Their brief and unobtrusive history.  
One hillock, ye may note, is small and low,  
Sunk almost to a level with the plain  
By weight of time ; the others, undepress'd,  
Are bold and swelling. There a husband sleeps,  
Deposited, in pious confidence  
Of glorious resurrection with the just,  
Near the loved-partner of his early days ;  
And, in the bosom of that family mould,  
A second wife is gather'd to his side ;  
The approved assistant of an arduous course  
From his mid-noon of manhood to old age !  
He also of his mate deprived, was left  
Alone — 'mid many children ; one a babe  
Orphan'd as soon as born. Alas ! 'tis not  
In course of nature that a father's wing  
Should warm these little ones ; and can he feed ?  
That was a thought of agony more keen.  
For, hand in hand with death, by strange mishap  
And chance encounter on their diverse road,  
The ghastlier shape of poverty had enter'd  
Into that house, unfear'd and unforeseen.  
He had stepp'd forth in time of urgent need,  
The generous surety of a friend ; and now  
The widow'd father found that all his rights  
In his paternal fields were undermined :  
Landless he was and penniless. The dews  
Of night and morn, that wet the mountain sides,  
The bright stars twinkling on their dusky tops,  
Were conscious of the pain that drove him forth  
From his own door, he knew not when to range —

He knew not where ; distracted was his brain,  
His heart was cloven ; and full oft he pray'd,  
In blind despair, that God would take them all.  
But suddenly, as if in one kind moment  
To encourage and remove, a gleam of light  
Broke from the very bosom of that cloud  
Which darken'd the whole prospect of his days.  
For he who now possess'd the joyless right  
To force the bondsman from his house and lands,  
In pity, and by admiration urged  
Of his unmurmuring and considerate mind,  
Meekly submissive to the law's decree,  
Lighten'd the penalty with liberal hand.  
The desolate father raised his head, and look'd  
On the wide world in hope. Within these walls,  
In course of time was solemnised the vow  
Whereby a virtuous woman, of grave years  
And of prudential habits, undertook  
The sacred office of a wife to him,  
Of mother to his helpless family.  
Nor did she fail — in nothing did she fail,  
Through various exercise of twice ten years,  
Save in some partial fondness for that child  
Which at the birth she had received, the babe  
Whose heart had known no mother but herself.  
By mutual efforts, by united hopes,  
By daily-growing help of boy and girl,  
Train'd early to participate that zeal  
Of industry, which runs before the day  
And lingers after it ; by strong restraint  
Of an economy which did not check  
The heart's more generous motions tow'rds themselves  
Or to their neighbours ; and by trust in God,  
This pair insensibly subdued the fears  
And troubles that beset their life : and thus  
Did the good father and his second mate  
Redeem at length their plot of smiling fields.

These, at this day, the eldest son retains :  
 The younger offspring, through the busy world,  
 Have all been scatter'd wide, by various fates ;  
 But each departed from the native vale,  
 In beauty flourishing, and moral worth !"

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## BOOK VII.

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### THE CHURCHYARD AMONG THE MOUNTAINS— CONTINUED.

Impression of these narratives upon the author's mind — Pastor invited to give account of certain graves that lie apart — Clergyman and his family — Fortunate influence of change of situation — Activity in extreme old age — Another clergyman, a character of resolute virtue — Lamentations over mis-directed applause — Instance of less exalted excellence in a deaf man — Elevated character of a blind man — Reflection upon blindness — Interrupted by a peasant who passes — His animal cheerfulness and careless vivacity — He occasions a digression on the fall of beautiful and interesting trees — A female infant's grave : joy at her birth ; sorrow at her departure — A youthful peasant — His patriotic enthusiasm — Distinguished qualities — And untimely death — Exultation of the Wanderer, as a patriot, in this picture — Solitary, how affected — Monument of a knight — Traditions concerning him — Peroration of the Wanderer on the transitoriness of things and the revolutions of society.— Hints at his own past calling.— Thanks the Pastor.

WHILE thus from theme to theme the historian pass'd,  
 The words he utter'd, and the scene that lay  
 Before our eyes, awaken'd in my mind  
 Vivid remembrance of those long-past hours,  
 When, in the hollow of some shadowy vale,  
 (What time the splendour of the setting sun

Lay beautiful on Snowdon's craggy top,  
On Cader Idris, or huge Penmanmaur,)   
A wandering youth, I listen'd with delight  
To pastoral melody or warlike air,  
Drawn from the chords of the ancient British harp  
By some accomplished master ; while he sate  
Amid the quiet of the green recess,  
And there did inexhaustibly dispense  
An interchange of soft or solemn tunes,  
Tender or blithe ; now, as the varying mood  
Of his own spirit urged — now as a voice  
From youth or maiden, or some honor'd chief  
Of his compatriot villagers (that hung  
Around him, drinking in the impassion'd notes  
Of the time-hallow'd minstrelsy) required  
For their heart's ease or pleasure. Strains of power  
Were they, to seize and occupy the sense ;  
But to a higher mark than song can reach  
Rose this pure eloquence. And, when the stream  
Which overflow'd the soul was pass'd away,  
A consciousness remain'd that it had left,  
Deposited upon the silent shore  
Of memory, images and precious thoughts,  
That shall not die, and cannot be destroy'd.

“ These grassy heaps lie amicably close,”  
Said I, “ like surges heaving in the wind  
Upon the surface of a mountain pool :  
Whence comes it, then, that yonder we behold  
Five graves, and only five, that lie apart,  
Unsociable company and sad ;  
And, furthermore, appearing to encroach  
On the smooth playground of the village-school ? ”

The Vicar answer'd : “ No disdainful pride  
In them who rest beneath, nor any course  
Of strange or tragic accident, hath help'd

To place those hillocks in that lonely guise.  
Once more look forth, and follow with your eyes  
The length of road which from yon mountain's base  
Through bare enclosures stretches, till its line  
Is lost among a little tuft of trees ;  
Then, reappearing in a moment, quits  
The cultured fields, and up the heathy waste,  
Mounts, as you see, in mazes serpentine,  
Towards an easy outlet of the vale,  
That little shady spot, that sylvan tuft,  
By which the road is hidden, also hides  
A cottage from our view ; though I discern  
(You scarcely can) amid its sheltering trees  
The smokeless chimney-top. All unembower'd  
And naked stood that lowly parsonage  
(For such in truth it is, and appertains  
To a small chapel in the vale beyond)  
When hither came its last inhabitant.

“ Rough and forbidding were the choicest roads  
By which our northern wilds could then be cross'd ;  
And into most of these secluded vales  
Was no access for wain, heavy or light.  
So, at his dwelling-place the priest arrived  
With store of household goods, in panniers slung  
On sturdy horses graced with jingling bells,  
And on the back of more ignoble beast,  
That, with like burthen of effects most prized  
Or easiest carried, closed the motley train.  
Young was I then, a school-boy of eight years ;  
But still, methinks, I see them as they pass'd  
In order, drawing tow'rds their wish'd-for home,  
Rock'd by the motion of a trusty ass  
Two ruddy children hung, a well-poised freight,  
Each in his basket nodding drowsily ;  
Their bonnets, I remember, wreathed with flowers,  
Which told that 'twas the pleasant month of June ;



And, close behind, the comely matron rode,  
A woman of soft speech and gracious smile,  
And with a lady's mien.—From far they came,  
Even from Northumbrian hills; yet theirs had been  
A merry journey, rich in pastime, cheer'd  
By music, prank, and laughter-stirring jest;  
And freak put on, and arch word dropp'd, to swell  
The cloud of fancy and uncouth surmise  
That gather'd round the slowly-moving train.  
'Whence do they come? and with what errand charged?  
Belong they to the fortune-telling tribe  
Who pitch their tents beneath the green-wood tree?  
Or are they strollers, furnish'd to enact  
Fair Rosamond, and the Children of the Wood,  
And, by that whisker'd tabby's aid, set forth  
The lucky venture of sage Whittington,  
When the next village hears the show announced  
By blast of trumpet!' Plenteous was the growth  
Of such conjectures, overheard, or seen  
On many a staring countenance portray'd  
Of boor or burgher, as they march'd along.  
And more than once their steadiness of face  
Was put to proof, and exercise supplied  
To their inventive humour, by stern looks,  
And questions in authoritative tone,  
From some staid guardian of the public peace,  
Checking the sober steed on which he rode,  
In his suspicious wisdom! oftener still  
By notice indirect, or blunt demand  
From traveller halting in his own despite,  
A simple curiosity to ease:  
Of which adventures, that beguiled and cheer'd  
Their grave migration, the good pair would tell,  
With undiminish'd glee, in hoary age.

“A priest he was by function; but his course  
From his youth up, and high as manhood's noon

(The hour of life to which he then was brought,)  
Had been irregular ; I might say, wild ;  
By books unsteadied, by his pastoral care  
Too little check'd. An active, ardent mind ;  
A fancy pregnant with resource and scheme  
To cheat the sadness of a rainy day ;  
Hands apt for all ingenious arts and games ;  
A generous spirit, and a body strong  
To cope with stoutest champions of the bowl ;  
Had earn'd for him sure welcome, and the rights  
Of a prized visitant, in the jolly hall  
Of a country squire ; or at the statelier board  
Of duke or earl, from scenes of courtly pomp  
Withdraw, — to while away the summer hours  
In condescension among rural guests.

“ With these high comrades he had revell'd long,  
Had frolic'd many a year ; a simple clerk  
By hopes of coming patronage beguiled  
And vex'd until the weary heart grew sick ;  
And so, abandoning each higher aim  
And all his showy friends, at length he turn'd  
For a life's stay, though slender, yet assured,  
To this remote and humble chapelry ;  
Which had been offer'd to his doubtful choice  
By an unthought-of-patron. Bleak and bare  
They found the cottage, their allotted home :  
Naked without, and rude within ; a spot  
With which the scantily-provided cure  
Not long had been endow'd ; and far remote  
The chapel stood, divided from that house  
By an unpeopled tract of mountain waste.  
Yet cause was none, whate'er regret might hang  
On his own mind, to quarrel with the choice  
Or the necessity that fix'd him here ;  
Apart from old temptations, and constrain'd  
To punctual labour in his sacred charge.

See him a constant preacher to the poor !  
And visiting, though not with saintly zeal,  
Yet, when need was, with no reluctant will,  
The sick in body, or distress'd in mind ;  
And, by as salutary change compell'd,  
Month after month, in that obscure abode  
To rise from timely sleep, and meet the day  
With no engagement, in his thoughts, more proud  
Or splendid than his garden could afford,  
His fields, or mountains by the heath-cock ranged,  
Or these wild brooks ; from which he now return'd  
Contentedly to make a temperate meal  
At his own board, where sat his gentle mate  
And three fair children plentifully fed,  
Though simply, from their little household farm ;  
With acceptable treat of fish or fowl  
By nature yielded to his practised hand ;—  
To help the small but certain comings-in  
Of that spare benefice. Yet not the less  
Theirs was a hospitable board, and theirs  
A charitable door. So days and years  
Pass'd on ;— the inside of that rugged house  
Was trimm'd and brighten'd by the matron's care,  
And gradually enriched with things of price,  
Which might be lack'd for use or ornament.  
What, though no soft and costly sofa there  
Insidiously stretch'd out its lazy length,  
And no vain mirror glitter'd on the walls,  
Yet were the windows of the low abode  
By shutters weather-fended, which at once  
Repell'd the storm and deaden'd its loud roar.  
There, snow-white curtains hung in decent folds ;  
Tough moss, and long-enduring mountain plants,  
That creep along the ground with sinuous trail,  
Were nicely braided ; and composed a work  
Like Indian mats, that with appropriate grace  
Lay at the threshold and the inner doors ;

And a fair carpet, woven by home-spun wool,  
But tinctur'd daintily with florid hues,  
For seemliness and warmth, on festive days  
Cover'd the smooth blue slabs of mountain stone  
With which the parlour floor, in simplest guise  
Of pastoral homesteads, had been long inlaid.  
These pleasing works the housewife's skill produced :  
Meanwhile the unsedentary master's hand  
Was busier with his task — to rid, to plant,  
To rear for food, for shelter, and delight ;  
A thriving covert ! And when wishes, form'd  
In youth, and sanction'd by the riper mind,  
Restored me to my native valley, here  
To end my days ; well pleased was I to see  
The once bare cottage, on the mountain side,  
Screen'd from assault of every bitter blast ;  
While the dark shadows of the summer leaves  
Danced in the breeze, upon its mossy roof.  
Time, which thus had afforded willing help  
To beautify with Nature's fairest growth  
This rustic tenement, had gently shed,  
Upon its master's frame a wintry grace ;  
The comeliness of unenfeebled age.  
But how could I say, gently ? for he still  
Retain'd a flashing eye, a burning palm,  
A stirring foot, and head which beats at nights  
Upon its pillow with a thousand schemes.  
Few likings had he dropp'd, few pleasures lost ;  
Generous and charitable, prompt to serve ;  
And still his harsher passions kept their hold —  
Anger and indignation. Still he loved  
The sound of titled names, and talk'd in glee  
Of long-past banquetings with high-born friends :  
Then, from those lulling fits of vain delight  
Uproused by recollected injury, rail'd  
At their false ways disdainfully, — and oft  
In bitterness, and with a threatening eye

Of fire, incensed beneath its hoary brow.  
These transports, with staid looks of pure good-will,  
And with soft smile his consort would reprove.  
She, far behind him in the race of years,  
Yet, keeping her first mildness, was advanced  
Far nearer, in the habit of her soul,  
To that still region wither all are bound.  
Him might we liken to the setting sun  
As I have seen it on some gusty day  
Struggling and bold, and shining from the west  
With an inconstant and mellow'd light ;  
She was a soft attendant cloud, that hung  
As if with wish to veil the restless orb,  
From which it did itself imbibe a ray  
Of pleasing lustre. — But no more of this ;  
I better love to sprinkle on the sod  
Which now divides the pair, or rather say  
Which still unites them, praises, like heaven's dew,  
Without distinction, falling upon both.  
Yoke-fellows were they long and well approved  
To endure and to perform.

“With frugal pain  
Yet in a course of generous discipline,  
Did this poor churchman and his consort rear  
Their progeny. Of three — sent forth to try  
The paths of fortune in the open world,  
One, not endow'd with firmness to resist  
The suit of pleasure, to his native vale  
Return'd and humbly till'd his father's glebe.  
The youngest daughter, too, in duty stay'd  
To lighten her declining mother's care.  
But, ere the bloom was pass'd away which health  
Preserved to adorn a cheek no longer young,  
Her heart, in course of nature, finding place  
For new affections, to the holy state  
Of wedlock they conducted her ; but still



The bride adhering to those filial cares,  
Dwelt with her mate beneath her father's roof.

“Our very first in eminence of years  
This old man stood, the patriarch of the vale!  
And, to his unmolested mansion, death  
Had never come through space of forty years;  
Sparing both old and young in that abode.  
Suddenly then they disappear'd: not twice  
Had summer scorch'd the fields; nor twice had fallen,  
On those high peaks, the first autumnal snow,  
Before the greedy visiter was closed,  
And the long privileged house left empty — swept  
As by a plague: yet no rapacious plague  
Had been among them; all was gentle death,  
One after one, with intervals of peace.  
A happy consummation! an accord  
Sweet, perfect, to be wish'd for! save that here  
Was something which to mortal sense might sound  
Like harshness, — that the old grey-headed sire,  
The oldest, he was taken last, survived  
When the meek partner of his age, his son,  
His daughter, and that late and high-prized gift,  
His little smiling grandchild, were no more.

“All gone, all vanish'd! he deprived and bare,  
How will he face the remnant of his life?  
What will become of him?’ we said, and mused  
In sad conjectures — ‘Shall we meet him now  
Haunting with rod and line the craggy brooks?  
Or shall we overhear him, as we pass,  
Striving to entertain the lonely hours  
With music?’ (for he had not ceased to touch  
The harp or viol which himself had framed,  
For their sweet purposes, with perfect skill.)  
‘What titles will he keep? will he remain  
Musician, gardener, builder, mechanist,

A planter and a rearer from the seed?  
A man of hope and forward-looking mind  
Even to the last! — Such was he, unsubdued.  
But Heaven was gracious; yet a little while,  
And this survivor, with his cheerful throng  
Of open schemes, and all his inward hoard  
Of unsunn'd griefs, too many and too keen,  
Was overcome by unexpected sleep,  
In one blest moment. Like a shadow thrown  
Softly and lightly from a passing cloud,  
Death fell upon him, while reclined he lay  
For noontide solace on the summer grass,  
The warm lap of his mother earth: and so,  
Their lenient terms of separation past  
That family (whose graves you there behold)  
By yet a higher privilege once more  
Were gathered to each other."

Calm of mind

And silence waited on these closing words;  
Until the Wanderer (whether moved by fear  
Lest in these passages of life were some  
That might have touched the sick heart of his friend  
Too nearly, or intent to reinforce  
His own firm spirit in degree depress'd  
By tender sorrow for our mortal state)  
Thus silence broke: — "Behold a thoughtless man  
From vice and premature decay preserved  
By useful habits, to a fitter soil  
Transplanted ere too late. — The hermit, lodged  
In the untrodden desert, tells his beads,  
With each repeating its allotted prayer,  
And thus divides and thus relieves the time;  
Smooth task, with his compared, whose mind could string  
Not scantily, bright minutes on the thread  
Of keen domestic anguish; and beguiled  
A solitude, unchosen, unprofess'd,

Till gentlest death released him. Far from us  
 Be the desire — too curiously to ask  
 How much of this is but the blind result  
 Of cordial spirits and vital temperament,  
 And what to higher powers is justly due.  
 But you, sir, know that in a neighbouring vale  
 A priest abides before whose life such doubts\*

\* A long and interesting account of the subject of our poet's eulogy will be found in the notes written by him on the Duddon Sonnets: from which we learn that the Rev. Robert Walker was born in 1709, and was the youngest of twelve children, and, being sickly in youth, "was brought up a scholar." After acting for some time in the capacity of schoolmaster, he was ordained, and became curate of Seathwaite, where he remained till his death, sixty-six years afterwards; having attained the patriarchal age of ninety-three. He chose Seathwaite in preference to Torver, which was offered to him, as there was a cottage attached, and he wished to marry; the yearly income of each of these places being at that time, £5. His wife, he informs us, brought him to the value of £40 for her fortune. They had a family of twelve children, of whom eight lived; these he educated respectably; one became a clergyman. Robert Walker is described as hospitable and generous to the needy; and, although the income of his curacy never exceeded £50 per annum, he left £2,000 to his family.

The then Bishop of Chester, recommended the joining of the curacy of Ulpha to that of Seathwaite, the united incomes being about £17, and the nomination was offered to Robert Walker, but he declined it, lest it should "*appear covetous in him.*" "What a contrast," adds Wordsworth, "does the life of this obscurely-seated and, in a point of worldly wealth, poorly-repaid churchman, present to that of Cardinal Wolsey!"

"O 'tis a burthen, Cromwell, 'tis a burthen  
 Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven."

The house of Robert Walker is described as a nursery of virtue — the family all industrious and amiable. He himself educated, without charge, the children of the whole parish, whilst spinning wool wherewith to clothe his household. He was at once the pastor, lawyer, scrivener for the whole district; for some of these services he was paid, and to all those occupations and means of increasing his income, he added, strangely enough, that of keeping an ale-house.

Fall to the ground ; whose gifts of nature lie  
Retired from notice, lost in attributes  
Of reason, honourably effaced by debts  
Which her poor treasure-house is content to owe,  
And conquests over her dominion gain'd,  
To which her forwardness must needs submit.  
In this one man is shewn a temperance, proof  
Against all trials ; industry severe  
And constant as the motion of the day ;  
Stern self-denial round him spread, with shade  
That might be deem'd forbidding, did not there  
All generous feelings flourish and rejoice ;  
Forbearance, charity in deed and thought,  
And resolution competent to take  
Out of the bosom of simplicity  
All that her holy customs recommend,  
And the best ages of the world prescribe.  
Preaching, administering, in every work  
Of his sublime vocation, in the walks  
Of worldly intercourse 'twixt man and man,  
And in his humble dwelling, he appears  
A labourer, with moral virtue girt,  
With spiritual graces, like a glory, crown'd."

"Doubt can be none," the Pastor said, "for whom  
This portraiture is sketch'd. The great, the good,  
The well-beloved, the fortunate, the wise, —  
These titles emperors and chiefs have borne,  
Honour assumed or given : and him the 'Wonderful,'

His extraordinary thrift and his undoubted disinterestedness, led the simple dalesmen to confer on him the title of "Wonderful." The £2,000, however, which he left from such slender means, no doubt, mainly contributing to obtain for him that title. But those who wish to form a fair estimate of the character of this worthy man, should temper down Wordsworth's somewhat poetical description of him by a perusal of the more matter-of-fact statements of the amusing writer of "Ravings and Ramblings round Coniston."

Our simple shepherds, speaking from the heart,  
Deservedly have styled.— From his abode  
In a dependent chapelry, that lies  
Behind yon hill, a poor and rugged wild,  
Which in his soul he lovingly embraced—  
And, having once espoused, would never quit;  
Hither, ere long, that lowly, great, good man  
Will be convey'd. An unelaborate stone  
May cover him; and by its help, perchance,  
A century shall hear his name pronounced,  
With images attendant on the sound;  
Then shall the slowly-gathering twilight close  
In utter night; and of his course remain  
No cognizable vestiges, no more  
Than of this breath, which frames itself in words  
To speak of him, and instantly dissolves.  
Noise is there not enough in doleful war,  
But that the heaven-born poets must stand forth,  
And lend the echoes of his sacred shell,  
To multiply and aggravate the din?  
Pangs are there not enough in hopeless love—  
And, in requited passion, all too much  
Of turbulence, anxiety, and fear—  
But that the minstrel of the rural shade  
Must tune his pipe, insidiously to nurse  
The perturbation in the suffering breast,  
And propagate its kind, where'er he may?  
Ah who (and with such rupture as befits  
The hallow'd theme) will rise and celebrate  
The good man's deeds and purposes; retrace  
His struggles, his discomfiture deplore,  
His triumphs hail, and glorify his end?  
That virtue, like the fumes and vapoury clouds  
Through fancy's heat redounding in the brain,  
And like the soft infections of the heart,  
By charm of measured words may spread through fields  
And cottages; and piety survive



Upon the lips of men in hall or bower ;  
Not for reproof, but high and warm delight,  
And grave encouragement, by song inspired.  
Vain thought ! but wherefore murmur or repine ;  
The memory of the just survives in heaven :  
And, without sorrow, will this ground receive  
That venerable clay. Meanwhile the best  
Of what it holds confines us to degrees  
In excellence less difficult to reach,  
And milder worth : nor need we travel far  
From those to whom our last regards were paid  
For such example.

Almost at the root  
Of that tall pine, the shadow of whose bare  
And slender stem, while here I sit at eve,  
Oft stretches tow'rd's me, like a long straight path  
Traced faintly in the green-sward ; there beneath  
A plain blue stone, a gentle dalesman lies,  
From whom, in early childhood, was withdrawn  
The precious gift of hearing. He grew up  
From year to year in loneliness of soul ;  
And this deep mountain valley was to him  
Soundless, with all its streams. The bird of dawn  
Did never rouse this cottager from sleep  
With startling summons ; nor for his delight  
The vernal cuckoo shouted ; not for him  
Murmur'd the labouring bee. When stormy winds  
Were working the broad bosom of the lake  
Into a thousand thousand sparkling waves,  
Rocking the trees, or driving cloud on cloud  
Along the sharp edge of yon lofty crags,  
The agitated scene before his eye  
Was silent as a picture : evermore  
Were all things silent, whereso'er he moved ;  
Yet, by the solace of his own pure thoughts  
Upheld, he duteously pursued the round

Of rural labours ; the steep mountain-side  
Ascended with his staff and faithful dog ;  
The plough he guided, and the scythe he sway'd ;  
And the ripe corn before his sickle fell  
Among the jocund reapers. For himself,  
All watchful and industrious as he was,  
He wrought not ; neither flock nor field he own'd ;  
No wish for wealth had place within his mind ;  
Nor husband's love, nor father's hope or care.  
Though born a younger brother, need was none  
That from the floor of his paternal home  
He should depart, to plant himself anew.  
And when, mature in manhood, he beheld  
His parents laid in earth, no loss ensued  
Of rights to him ; but he remain'd well pleased,  
By the pure bond of independent love,  
An inmate of a second family,  
The fellow-labourer and friend of him  
To whom the small inheritance had fallen.  
Nor deem that his mild presence was a weight  
That press'd upon his brother's house, for books  
Were ready comrades whom he could not tire,  
Of whose society the blameless man  
Was never satiate. Their familar voice,  
Even to old age, with unabated charm  
Beguiled his leisure hours, refresh'd his thoughts :  
Beyond its natural elevation raised  
His introverted spirit, and bestow'd  
Upon his life an outward dignity  
Which all acknowledged. The dark winter night,  
The stormy day, had each its own resource ;  
Song of the muses, sage historic tale,  
Science severe, or word of Holy Writ  
Announcing immortality and joy  
To the assembled spirits of the just,  
From imperfections and decay secure.  
Thus soothed at home, thus busy in the field,

To no perverse suspicion he gave way,  
No languor, peevishness, nor vain complaint :  
And they, who were about him, did not fail  
In reverence, or in courtesy ; they prized  
His gentle manners ; and his peaceful smiles,  
The gleams of his slow-varying countenance,  
Were met with answering sympathy and love.

“ At length, when sixty years and five were told  
A slow disease insensibly consumed  
The powers of nature ; and a few short steps  
Of friends and kindred bore him from his home  
(Yon cottage shaded by the woody crags)  
To the profounder stillness of the grave.  
Nor was his funeral denied the grace  
Of many tears, virtuous and thoughtful grief ;  
Heart-sorrow render'd sweet by gratitude.  
And now that monumental stone preserves  
His name, and unambitiously relates  
How long, and by what kindly outward aids,  
And in what pure contentedness of mind,  
The sad privation was by him endured.  
And yon tall pine-tree, whose composing sound  
Was wasted on the good man's living ear,  
Hath now its own peculiar sanctity ;  
And, as the touch of each wandering breeze,  
Murmurs, not idly, o'er his peaceful grave.

“ Soul-cheering light, most bountiful of things !  
Guide on our way, mysterious comforter !  
Whose sacred influence spread through earth and heaven  
We all too thanklessly participate,  
Thy gifts were utterly withheld from him  
Whose place of rest is near yon ivied porch.  
Yet, of the wild brooks ask if he complain'd ;  
Ask of the channell'd river if they held  
A safer, easier, more determined course.  
What terror doth it strike into the mind

To think of one, who cannot see, advancing  
 Towards some precipice's airy brink !  
 But, timely warn'd *he* would have stay'd his steps ;  
 Protected, say enlighten'd, by his ear,  
 And on the very brink of vacancy  
 Not more endanger'd than a man whose eye  
 Beholds the gulf beneath. No flow'ret blooms\*

\* In Mr. Atkinson's "Worthies of Westmorland," we are informed that this whole passage is accurately descriptive of John Gough, an esteemed friend of Wordsworth's. John Gough was generally reputed one of the first mathematicians of his age. As a mathematical teacher he was eminently successful. Whewell and King (senior wranglers) were among his many distinguished pupils : and the celebrated Dr. Dalton was for some time his pupil in mathematics and experimental philosophy. All these acquirements were made by a man who had been deprived of eyesight by an attack of small pox when he was between two and three years of age. Botany was one of his most cherished pursuits, and a circumstance is recorded which attests at once to his astonishing memory and almost incredible nicety of *touch*. Wordsworth in his elegiac verses over his brother, had beautifully described the *silene acaulis*, or moss campion,

" And let me calmly bless the power  
 That meets me in this unknown flower,  
 Affecting type of him I mourn.

\* \* \* \* \*

He would have loved thy modest place  
 Meek flower ! To him I should have said,  
 It grows upon its native bed,  
 Beside our parting place ;  
*There cleaving to the ground it lies*  
*With multitude of purple eyes*  
*Spangling, a cushion green-like moss."*

There is every reason to believe that the whole passage, especially those parts of it descriptive of the plant, arrested Gough's attention and excited his curiosity.

Wordsworth published the lines in 1805, and Gough examined the plant in 1817, so that nearly twelve years had elapsed since he had heard the description of it read, and from its description alone it lived upon his touch, so that when a specimen was put into his hands, he said immediately, "*I have never examined this plant before, but it is silene acaulis.*"

Throughout the lofty range of these rough hills,  
Or in the woods, that could from him conceal  
Its birthplace ; none whose figure did not live  
Upon his touch. The bowels of the earth  
Enrich'd with knowledge his industrious mind ;  
The ocean paid him tribute from the stores  
Lodged in her bosom ; and by science led,  
His genius mounted to the plains of heaven.  
Methinks I see him : how his eyeballs roll'd  
Beneath his ample brow, in darkness pair'd,—  
But each instinct with spirit ; and the frame  
Of the whole countenance alive with thought,  
Fancy, and understanding ; while the voice  
Discours'd of natural and moral truth  
With eloquence, and such authentic power,  
That, in his presence, humbler knowledge stood  
Abash'd, and tender pity overawed."

"A noble, and, to unreflecting minds,  
A marvellous spectacle," the Wanderer said,  
"Beings like these present ! But proofs abound  
Upon the earth that faculties, which seem  
Extinguish'd, do not, *therefore*, cease to be.  
And to the mind among her powers of sense  
This transfer is permitted,—not alone  
That the bereft may win their recompence ;  
But for remoter purposes of love  
And charity ; not last nor least for this,  
That to the imagination may be given  
A type and shadow of an awful truth,  
How, likewise, under sufferance divine,  
Darkness is banish'd from the realms of death,  
By man's imperishable spirit quell'd.  
Unto the men who see not as we see,  
Futurity was thought, in ancient times,  
To be laid open, and they prophesied.  
And know we not that from the blind have flow'd



The highest, holiest, raptures of the lyre ;  
And wisdom married to immortal verse ? ”

Among the humbler worthies, at our feet  
Lying insensible to human praise,  
Love, or regret — *whose* lineaments would next  
Have been portray'd, I guess not ; but it chanced  
That near the quiet churchyard were we sate,  
A team of horses and a pond'rous freight  
Pressing behind, adown a rugged slope,  
Whose sharp descent confounded their array,  
Came at that moment, ringing noisily.

“ Here,” said the Pastor “ do we muse, and mourn  
The waste of death ; and lo ! the giant oak  
Stretch'd on his bier ! that massy timber-wain ;  
Nor fail to note the man who guides the team.”

He was a peasant of the lowest class :  
Gray locks profusely round his temples hung  
In clust'ring curls, like ivy, which the bite  
Of winter cannot thin ; the fresh air lodged  
Within his cheek, as light within a cloud ;  
And he return'd our greeting with a smile.  
When he had pass'd, the Solitary spake :  
“ A man he seems of cheerful yesterdays  
And confident to-morrow ; with a face  
Not worldly-minded ; for it bears too much  
Of Nature's impress, — gaiety and health,  
Freedom and hope ; but keen, withal, and shrewd,  
His gestures note, — and hark ! his tones of voice  
Are all vivacious as his mien and looks.”

The Pastor answer'd : — “ You have read him well.  
Year after year is added to his store  
With *silent* increase ; summers, winters — past,  
Past or to come ; yea, boldly might I say,

Ten summers and ten winters of the space  
That lies beyond life's ordinary bounds,  
Upon his sprightly vigour cannot fix  
The obligation of an anxious mind,  
A pride in having, or a fear to lose ;  
Possess'd like outskirts of some large domain,  
By any one more thought of than by him  
Who holds the land in fee, its careless lord !  
Yet is the creature rational — endow'd  
With foresight ; hears, too, every Sabbath-day,  
The Christian promise with attentive ear,  
Nor disbelieves the tidings which he hears.  
Meanwhile the incense, offer'd up by him  
Is of the kind which beasts and birds present  
In grove or pasture ; cheerfulness of soul,  
From trepidation and repining free.  
How many scrupulous worshippers fall down  
Upon their knees, and daily homage pay  
Less worthy, less religious even, than his !

“ This qualified respect, the old man's due,  
Is paid without reluctance ; but in truth,”  
Said the good Vicar with a fond half smile,  
“ I feel at times a motion of despite  
Towards one, whose bold contrivances and skill,  
As you have seen, bear such conspicuous part  
In works of havoc ; taking from these vales,  
One after one, their proudest ornaments.  
Full oft his doings leave me to deplore  
Tall ash-tree sown by winds, by vapours nursed,  
In the dry crannies of the pendent rocks ;  
Light birch, aloft upon the horizon's edge,  
Transparent texture, framing in the east  
A veil of glory for the ascending moon ;  
And oak whose roots by noontide dew were damp'd,  
And on whose forehead inaccessible  
The raven lodged in safety. Many a ship

Launch'd into Morcamb Bay, hath owed to him  
Her strong knee-timbers, and the mast that bears  
The loftiest of her pendants. Help he gives  
To lordly mansion rising far or near ;  
The enormous wheel that turns ten thousand spindles,  
And the vast engine labouring in the mine,  
Content with meaner prowess, must have lack'd  
The trunk and body of their marvellous strength,  
If this undaunted enterprise had fail'd  
Among the mountain coves, or keen research  
In forest, park, or chase. Yon household fir,  
A guardian planted to fence off the blast,  
But towering high the roof above, as if  
Its humble destination were forgot ;  
That sycamore, which annually holds  
Within its shade, as in a stately tent  
On all sides open to the fanning breeze,  
A grave assemblage, seated while they shear  
The fleece-encumber'd flock — the ' Joyful Elm,'  
Around whose trunk the lasses dance in May,  
And the ' Lord's Oak ' would plead their several rights  
In vain, if he were master of their fate.  
Not one would have his pitiful regard,  
For prized accommodation, pleasant use,  
For dignity, for old acquaintance' sake,  
For ancient custom or distinguish'd name.  
His sentence to the axe would doom them all.  
But green in age and lusty as he is,  
And promising to stand from year to year,  
Less, as might seem, in rivalry with men  
Than with the forest's more enduring growth,  
His own appointed hour will come at last ;  
And, like the haughty spoilers of the world,  
This keen destroyer, in his turn, must fall.

“ Now from the living, pass we once again ;  
From age,” the Priest continued, “ turn your thoughts ;—

From age, that often unlamented drops,  
And mark that daisied hillock, three spans long.  
Seven lusty sons sate daily round the board  
Of Gold-rill side; and when the hope had ceased  
Of other progeny, a daughter then  
Was given, the crowning glory of the whole !  
Welcomed with joy, whose penetrating power  
Was not unfelt amid that heavenly calm  
With which by nature every mother's soul  
Is stricken, in the moment when her throes  
Are ended, and her ears have heard the cry  
Which tells her that a living child is born,  
And she lies conscious in a blissful rest,  
That the dread storm is weather'd by them both.

“ The father — him at this unlook'd-for gift  
A bolder transport seizes. From the side  
Of his bright hearth, and from his open door,  
And from the laurel-shaded seat thereby,  
Day after day the gladness is diffused  
To all that come, and almost all that pass ;  
Invited, summon'd, to partake the cheer  
Spread on the never-empty board, and drink  
Health and good wishes to his new-born girl,  
From cups replenish'd by his joyous hand.  
Those seven fair brothers variously were moved.  
Each by the thoughts best suited to his years :  
But most of all, and with most thankful mind,  
The hoary grandsire felt himself enrich'd ;  
A happiness that ebb'd not, but remain'd  
To fill the total measure of the soul !  
From the low tenement, his own abode,  
Whither, as to a little private cell,  
He had withdrawn from bustle, care, and noise,  
To spend the sabbath of old age in peace,  
Once every day he duteously repair'd  
To rock the cradle of the slumbering babe :

For in that female infant's name he heard ;  
The silent name of his departed wife ;  
Heart-stirring music ! hourly heard that name ;  
Full blest he was, ' Another Margaret Green,'  
Oft did he say, ' was come to Gold-rill side.'

" Oh ! pang unthought of, as the precious boon  
Itself had been unlook-for : — oh ! dire stroke  
Of desolating anguish for them all !  
Just as the child could totter on the floor,  
And by some friendly finger's help upstay'd,  
Range round the garden-walk, whose low ground flowers  
Were peeping forth, shy messengers of spring, —  
Even at that hopeful time, — the winds of March,  
One sunny day, smiting insiduously,  
Raised in the tender passage of the throat  
Viewless obstruction ; whence, all unforwarn'd,  
The household lost their hope and soul's delight,  
But Providence, that gives and takes away  
By His own law, is merciful and just ;  
Time wants not power to soften all regrets,  
And prayer and thought can bring to worst distress  
Due resignation. Therefore, though some tears  
Fail not to spring from either parent's eye  
Oft as they hear of sorrow like their own,  
Yet this departed little one, too long  
The innocent troubler of their quiet, sleeps  
In what may now be call'd a peaceful grave.

" On a bright day, the brightest of the year,  
These mountains echo'd with an unknown sound,  
A volley, thrice repeated o'er the corse  
Let down into the hollow of that grave,  
Whose shelving sides are red with naked mould.  
Ye rains of April, duly wet this earth !  
Spare, burning sun of midsummer, these sods,  
That they may knit together, and therewith



Our thoughts unite in kindred quietness !  
Nor so the valley shall forget her loss.  
Dear youth, by young and old alike beloved,  
To me as precious as my own ! — Green herbs  
May creep (I wish that they would softly creep)  
Over thy last abode, and we may pass  
Reminded less imperiously of thee :  
The ridge itself may sink into the breast  
Of earth, the great abyss, and be no more ;  
Yet shall not thy remembrance leave our hearts  
Thy image disappear. The mountain-ash,  
Deck'd with autumnal berries that outshine  
Spring's richest blossoms, yields a splendid show,  
Amid the leafy woods ; and ye have seen  
By a brook-side, or solitary tarn,  
How she her station doth adorn,—the pool  
Glows at her feet, and all the gloomy rocks  
Are brighten'd round her. In his native vale  
Such and so glorious did this youth appear ;  
A sight that kindled pleasure in all hearts  
By his ingenuous beauty, by the gleam  
Of his fair eyes, by his capacious brow,  
By all the graces with which Nature's hand  
Had bounteously array'd him. As old bards  
Tell in their idle songs of wandering gods,  
Pan or Apollo, veil'd in human form ;  
Yet, like the sweet-breath'd violet of the shade,  
Discover'd in their own despite to sense  
Of mortals, (if such fables without blame  
May find chance mention on this sacred ground,)  
So, through a simple rustic garb's disguise,  
And through the impediment of rural cares,  
In him reveal'd a scholar's genius shone ;  
And so, not wholly hidden from men's sight,  
In him the spirit of a hero walk'd  
Our unpretending valley.—How the quoit  
Whizz'd from the stripling's arm ! If touch'd by him,

The inglorious football mounted to the pitch  
Of the lark's flight, or shaped a rainbow curve,  
Aloft, in prospect of the shouting field !

The indefatigable fox had learn'd

To dread his perseverance in the chase. .

With admiration he could lift his eyes

To the wide-ruling eagle, and his hand

Was loath to assault the majesty he loved ;

Else had the strongest fastnesses proved weak

To guard the royal brood. The sailing glead,

The wheeling swallow, and the darting snipe,

The sportive sea-gull dancing with the waves,

And cautious water-fowl, from distant climes,

Fix'd at their seat,—the centre of the mere,

Were subject to young Oswald's steady aim.

“From Gallia's coast a tyrant's threats were hurl'd ;

Our country mark'd the preparations vast

Of hostile forces ; and she call'd — with voice

That fill'd her plains, and reach'd her utmost shores,

And in remotest vales was heard — To arms !

Then, for the first time, here you might have seen

The shepherd's gray to martial scarlet changed,

That flash'd uncouthly through the woods and fields.

Ten hardy striplings, all in bright attire,

And graced with shining weapons, weekly march'd

From this lone valley to a central spot,

Where, in assemblage with the flower and choice

Of the surrounding district, they might learn

The rudiments of war ; ten — hardy, strong,

And valiant ; but young Oswald, like a chief,

And yet a modest comrade, led them forth

From their shy solitude, to face the world,

With a gay confidence and seemly pride :

Measuring the soil beneath their happy feet

Like youths released from labour, and yet bound

To most laborious service, though to them

A festival of unencumber'd ease ;  
The inner spirit keeping holiday,  
Like vernal ground to Sabbath sunshine left.

“Oft have I mark'd him, at some leisure hour,  
Stretch'd on the grass or seated in the shade  
Among his fellows, while an ample map  
Before their eyes lay carefully outspread  
From which the gallant teacher would discourse,  
Now pointing this way and now that.—‘Here flows,’  
Thus would he say, ‘the Rhine, that famous stream !  
Eastward, the Danube, tow’rds this inland sea,  
A mightier river, winds from realm to realm ;  
And, like a serpent, shews his glittering back  
Bespotted with innumerable isles.  
Here reigns the Russian, there the Turk ; observe  
His capital city !’ Thence, along a tract  
Of livelier interest to his hopes and fears  
His finger-moved, distinguishing the spots  
Where wide-spread conflict then most fiercely raged :  
Nor left unstigmatised those fatal fields  
On which the sons of mighty Germany  
Were taught a based submission. ‘Here behold  
A nobler race, the Switzers, and their land,  
Vales deeper far than these of ours, huge woods,  
And mountains white with everlasting snow ?’  
And surely he that spake with kindling brow,  
Was a true patriot, hopeful as the best  
Of that young peasantry who, in our days,  
Have fought and perish’d for Helvetia’s right  
Ah, not in vain !—or those who, in old time,  
For work of happier issue, to the side  
Of Tell came trooping from a thousand huts,  
When he had risen alone ! No braver youth  
Descended from Judea’s heights, to march  
With righteous Joshua ; or appear’d in arms  
When grove was fell’d, and altar was cast down,

And Gideon blew the trumpet, soul-inflamed,  
And strong in hatred of idolatry."

This spoken, from his seat the Pastor rose,  
And moved towards the grave. Instinctively  
His steps we follow'd; and my voice exclaim'd,  
"Power to the oppressors of the world is given,  
A might of which they dream not. Oh! the curse,  
To be the awakener of divinest thoughts,  
Father and founder of exalted deeds:  
And, to whole nations bound in servile straits  
The liberal donor of capacities  
More than heroic! this to be, nor yet  
Have sense of one connatural wish, nor yet  
Deserve the least return of human thanks;  
Winning no recompence but deadly hate  
With pity mix'd — astonishment with scorn!"

When these involuntary words had ceased,  
The Pastor said: "So Providence is served;  
The forked weapon of the skies can send  
Illumination into deep, dark holds,  
Which the mild sunbeam hath not power to pierce.  
Why do ye quake, intimidated thrones?  
For, not unconscious of the mighty debt  
Which to outrageous wrong the sufferer owes,  
Europe, through all her habitable seats,  
Is thirsting for *their* overthrow, who still  
Exist, as pagan temples stood of old,  
By very horror of their impious rites  
Preserved — are suffer'd to extend their pride.  
Like cedars on the top of Lebanon  
Darkening the sun. But less impatient thoughts,  
And love 'all hoping, and expecting all,'  
This hallow'd grave demands, where rests in peace  
A humble champion of the better cause;  
A peasant youth — so call him, for he ask'd

No higher name ; in whom our country shew'd  
As in a favourite son, most beautiful.  
In spite of vice, and misery, and disease,  
Spread with the spreading of her weathly arts,  
England, the ancient and the free, appear'd  
In him to stand before my swimming eyes  
Unconquerably virtuous and secure.  
No more of this, lest I offend his dust ;  
Short was his life, and a brief tale remains.

“ One summer's day, a day of annual pomp  
And solemn chase, from morn to sultry noon  
His steps had follow'd, fleetest of the fleet,  
The red-deer driven along its native heights  
With cry of hound and horn ; and from that toil  
Return'd with sinews weaken'd and relax'd,  
This generous youth, too negligent of self,  
(A natural failing which maturer years  
Would have subdued,) took fearlessly — and kept —  
His wonted station in the chilling flood,  
Among a busy company convened  
To wash his father's flock. Convulsions dire  
Seized him, that self-same night ; and through the space  
Of twelve ensuing days his frame was wrench'd,  
Till Nature rested from her work in death.  
To him, thus snatch'd away, his comrades paid  
A soldier's honours. At his funeral hour  
Bright was the sun, the sky a cloudless blue, —  
A golden lustre slept upon the hills :  
And if by chance a stranger, wand'ring there,  
From some commanding eminence had look'd  
Down on this spot, well pleased would he have seen  
A glittering spectacle ; but every face  
Was pallid ; seldom hath that eye been moist  
With tears that wept not then ; nor were the few,  
Who from their dwellings came not forth to join  
In this sad service, less disturb'd than we.



They started at the tributary peal  
Of instantaneous thunder, which announced,  
Through the still air, the closing of the grave,  
And distant mountains echo'd with a sound  
Of lamentation never heard before !”

The Pastor ceased. My venerable friend  
Victoriously upraised his clear bright eye,  
And, when that eulogy was ended, stood  
Enrapt, as if his inward sense perceived  
The prolongation of some still response,  
Sent by the ancient soul of this wide land —  
The spirit of its mountains and its seas,  
Its cities, temples, fields, its awful power,  
Its rights and virtues — by that Deity  
Descending and supporting his pure heart  
With patriotic confidence and joy,  
And, at the last of those memorial words,  
The pining Solitary turn'd aside ;  
Whether through manly instinct to conceal  
Tender emotions spreading from the heart  
To his worn cheek ; or with uneasy shame  
For those cold humours of habitual spleen,  
Which, fondly seeking in dispraise of man,  
Solace and self-excuse, had sometimes urged  
To self-abuse a not ineloquent tongue.  
Right tow'rds the sacred edifice his steps  
Had been directed ; and we saw him now  
Intent upon a monumental stone,  
Whose uncouth form was grafted on the wall,  
Or rather seem'd to have grown into the side  
Of the rude pile ; as ofttimes trunks of trees,  
Where Nature works in wild and craggy spots,  
Are seen incorporate with the living rock ;  
To indure for aye. The Vicar, taking note  
Of his employment, with a courteous smile,  
Exclaim'd, “ The sagest antiquary's eye

That task would foil." And with these added words,  
He thitherward advanced : " Tradition tells  
That, in Eliza's golden days, a knight  
Came on a war-horse sumptuously attired,  
And fixed his home in this sequester'd vale.  
'Tis left untold if here he first drew breath,  
Or as a stranger reach'd this deep recess,  
Unknowing and unknown. A pleasing thought  
I sometimes entertain, that, haply bound  
To Scotland's court in service of his queen,  
Or sent on mission to some northern chief  
Of England's realm, this vale he might have seen  
With transient observation ; and thence caught  
An image fair, which, bright'ning in his soul  
When years admonish'd him of failing strength,  
And he no more rejoiced in war's delights,  
Had power to draw him from the world,—resolved  
To make that paradise his chosen home,  
To which his peaceful fancy oft had turn'd.  
Vague thoughts are these ; but if belief may rest  
Upon unwritten story fondly traced  
From sire to son, in this obscure retreat  
The knight arrived, with pomp of spear and shield,  
And borne upon a charger covered o'er  
With gilded housings. And the lofty steed —  
His sole companion, and his faithful friend,  
Whom he, in gratitude, let loose to range  
In fertile pastures — was beheld with eyes  
Of admiration and delightful awe,  
By those untravell'd dalesmen. With less pride,  
Yet free from touch of envious discontent,  
They saw a mansion at his bidding rise,  
Like a bright star, amid the lowly band  
Of their rude homesteads. Here the warrior dwelt,  
And in that mansion children of his own,  
Or kindred, gather'd round him. As a tree  
That falls and disappears, the house is gone :

And, through improvidence, or want of love  
For ancient worth and honourable things,  
The spear and shield are vanish'd, which the knight  
Hung in his rustic hall. One ivied arch  
Myself have seen, a gateway, last remains  
Of that foundation in domestic care  
Raised by his hands. And now no trace is left  
Of the mild-hearted champion, save this stone,  
Faithless memorial ! and his family name  
Borne by yon clustering cottages, that sprang  
From out the ruins of his stately lodge ;  
These, and the name and title at full length, —  
Sir Alfred Irthing — with appropriate words  
Accompanied, still extant, in a wreath  
Or posy, girding round the several fronts  
Of three clear-sounding and harmonious bells,  
That in the steeple hang, his pious gift."

"So fails, so languishes, grows dim, and dies,"  
The gray-hair'd wanderer pensively exclaim'd,  
"All that this world is proud of. From their spheres  
The stars of human glory are cast down ; \*  
Perish the roses and the flowers of kings ;  
Princes, and emperors, and the crowns and palms  
Of all the mighty, wither'd and consumed !  
Nor is power given to lowliest innocence  
Long to protect her own. The man himself  
Departs ; and soon is spent the line of those  
Who, in the bodily image, in the mind,  
In heart or soul, in station or pursuit,  
Did most resemble him. Degrees and ranks,

\* The foundation charter of St. Mary's Abbey, Furness, opens in the following elegant strain : — "Considering every day the uncertainty of life ; that the roses and flowers of kings, emperors, and dukes, and the crowns and palms of all the great, wither and decay, and that all things with uninterrupted course hasten to dissolution and death : I therefore," &c.

Fraternities and orders — heaping high  
New wealth upon the burthen of the old,  
And placing trust in privilege confirm'd  
And re-confirm'd — are scoff'd at with a smile  
Of greedy foretaste, from the secret stand  
Of desolation aim'd : to slow decline  
These yield, and these to sudden overthrow ;  
Their virtue, service, happiness, and state  
Expire ; and Nature's pleasant robe of green,  
Humanity's appointed shroud, enwraps  
Their monuments and their memory. The vast frame  
Of social nature changes evermore  
Her organs and her members, with decay  
Restless, and restless generation, powers  
And functions dying and produced at need,—  
And by this law the mighty whole subsists :  
With an ascent and progress in the main ;  
Yet, oh ! how disproportion'd to the hopes  
And expectations of self-flattering minds !  
The courteous knight whose bones are here interr'd,  
Lived in an age conspicuous as our own  
For strife and ferment in the minds of men ;  
Whence alteration, in the forms of things,  
Various and vast. A memorable age !  
Which did to him assign a pensive lot,  
To linger 'mid the last of those bright clouds,  
That, on the steady breeze of honour, sail'd  
In long procession calm and beautiful.  
He, who had seen his own bright order fade,  
And its devotion gradually decline,  
(While War, relinquishing the lance and shield,  
Her temper changed, and bow'd to other laws,)  
Had also witness'd, in his morn of life,  
That violent commotion, which o'erthrew,  
In town, and city, and sequester'd glen,  
Altar, and cross, and church of solemn roof,  
And old religious house — pile after pile ;

And shook the tenants out into the fields,  
Like wild beasts without home ! Their hour was come,  
But why no softening thought of gratitude,  
No just remembrance, scruple, or wise doubt ?  
Benevolence is mild ; nor borrows help,  
Save at worst need, from bold impetuous force,  
Fitliest allied to anger and revenge.  
But human-kind rejoices in the might  
Of mutability, and airy hopes,  
Dancing around her, hinder and disturb  
Those meditations of the soul which feed  
The retrospective virtues. Festive songs  
Break from the madden'd nations at the sight  
Of sudden overthrow ; and cold neglect  
Is the sure consequence of slow decay.

“Even,” said the Wanderer, “as that courteous knight  
Bound by his vow to labour for redress  
Of all who suffer wrong, and to enact  
By sword and lance the law of gentleness,  
If I may venture of myself to speak,  
Trusting that not incongruously I blend  
Low things with lofty, I too shall be doom'd  
To outlive the kindly use and fair esteem  
Of the poor calling which my youth embraced  
With no unworthy prospect. But enough ;  
Thoughts crowd upon me—and 'twere seemlier now  
To stop, and yield our gracious teacher thanks  
For the pathetic records which his voice  
Hath here deliver'd : words of heartfelt truth,  
Tending to patience when affliction strikes ;  
To hope and love ; to confident repose  
In God ; and reverence for the dust of man.”



## BOOK VIII.

## THE PARSONAGE.

Pastor's apprehensions that he might have detained his auditors too long — Invitation to his house — Solitary disinclined to comply — Rallies the Wanderer — And somewhat playfully draws a comparison between his itinerant profession and that of the knight-errant — Which leads to Wanderer's giving an account of changes in the country from the manufacturing spirit — Favourable effects — The other side of the picture, and chiefly as it has affected the humbler classes — Wanderer asserts the hollowness of all national grandeur if unsupported by moral worth — Gives instances — Physical science unable to support itself — Lamentations over an excess of manufacturing industry among the humbler classes of society — Picture of a child employed in a cotton-mill — Ignorance and degradation of children among the agricultural population reviewed — Conversation broken off by a renewed invitation from the Pastor — Path leading to his house — Its appearance described — His daughter — His wife — His son (a boy) enters with his companion — Their happy appearance — The Wanderer, how affected by the sight of them.

THE pensive Sceptic of the lonely vale  
 To those acknowledgments subscribed his own,  
 With a sedate compliance, which the Priest  
 Fail'd not to notice, inly pleased, and said : —  
 “ If ye, by whom invited, I commenced  
 Those narratives of calm and humble life,  
 Be satisfied, 'tis well, — the end is gain'd ;  
 And, in return for sympathy bestow'd,  
 And patient listening, thanks accept from me.  
 Life, death, eternity ! momentous themes  
 Are these — and might demand a seraph's tongue,  
 Were they not equal to their own support ;  
 And therefore no incompetence of mine  
 Could do them wrong. The universal forms

Of human nature, in a spot like this,  
Present themselves at once to all men's view :  
Ye wish'd for act and circumstance, that make  
The individual known and understood ;  
And such as my best judgment could select  
From what the place afforded, have been given ;  
Though apprehensions cross'd me in the course  
Of this self-pleasing exercise, that ye  
My zeal to his would liken, who, possess'd  
Of some rare gems, or pictures finely wrought,  
Unlocks his cabinet, and draws them forth  
One after one — soliciting regard  
To this, and this, as worthier than the last,  
Till the spectator, who awhile was pleased  
More than th' exhibitor himself, becomes  
Weary and faint, and longs to be released.  
But let us hence ! my dwelling is in sight,  
And there " —

At this the Solitary shrunk  
With backward will ; but, wanting not address  
That inward motion to disguise, he said  
To his compatriot, smiling as he spake, —  
" The peaceable remains of this good knight  
Would be disturb'd, I fear, with wrathful scorn,  
If consciousness could reach him where he lies  
That one, albeit of these degenerate times,  
Deploring changes past, or dreading change  
Forseen, had dared to couple, even in thought,  
The fine vocation of the sword and lance  
With the gross aims and body-bending toil  
Of a poor brotherhood who walk the earth  
Pitied, and, where they are not known, despised.  
Yet, by the good knight's leave, the two estates  
Are graced with some resemblance. Errant those,  
Exiles and wanderers ; and the like are these  
Who, with their burthen, traverse hill and dale,

Carrying relief for nature's simple wants.  
What though no higher recompence they seek  
Than honest maintenance, by irksome toil  
Full oft procured, yet such may claim respect,  
Among the intelligent, for what this course  
Enables them to be and to perform,  
Their tardy steps give leisure to observe,  
While solitude permits the mind to feel ;  
And doth instruct her to supply defects  
By the division of her inward self,  
For grateful converse : and to the poor men,  
As I have heard you boast with honest pride,  
Nature is bountiful ; where'er they go,  
Kind nature's various wealth is all their own.  
Versed in the characters of men ; and bound,  
By tie of daily interest, to maintain  
Conciliatory manners and smooth speech ;  
Such have been, and still are, in their degree,  
Examples efficacious to refine  
Rude intercourse ; apt instruments to excite,  
By importation of unlook'd-for arts,  
Barbarian torper, and blind prejudice ;  
Raising, through just gradation, savage life  
To rustic, and the rustic to urbane.  
Within their moving magazines is lodged  
Power that comes forth to quicken and exalt  
Th' affections seated in the mother's breast,  
And in the lover's fancy ; and to feed  
The sober sympathies of long-tried friends.  
By these itinerants, as experienced men,  
Counsel is given ; contention they appease  
With healing words ; and in remotest wilds,  
Tears wipe away, and pleasant tidings bring ;  
Could the proud quest of chivalry do more ? ”

“ Happy,” rejoin'd the Wanderer, “ they who gain  
A panegyric from your generous tongue !

But, if to these wayfarers once pertain'd  
Aught of romantic interest, 'tis gone ;  
Their purer service, in this realm at least,  
Is past for ever. An inventive age  
Has wrought, if not with speed of magic, yet  
To most strange issues. I have lived to mark  
A new and unforeseen creation rise  
From out the labours of a peaceful land,  
Wielding her potent enginery to frame  
And to produce, with appetite as keen  
As that of war, which rests not night or day,  
Industrious to 'destroy ! With fruitless pains  
Might one like me *now* visit many a tract  
Which, in his youth, he trod, and trod again,  
A lone pedestrian with a scanty freight,  
Wish'd for, or welcome, wheresoe'er he came —  
Among the tenantry of thorpe and vill ;  
Or straggling burgh, of ancient charter proud,  
And dignified by battlements and towers  
Of some stern castle, mouldering on the brow  
Of a green hill or bank of rugged stream.  
The footpath faintly mark'd, the horse-track wild,  
And formidable length of plashy lane,  
(Prized avenues ere others had been shaped  
Or easier links connecting place with place),  
Have vanish'd — swallow'd up by stately roads,  
Easy and bold, that penetrate the gloom  
Of Englands farthest glens. The earth has lent  
Her waters, air her breezes ; and the sail  
Of traffic glides with ceaseless interchange,  
Glistening along the low and woody dale,  
Or on the naked mountain's lofty side.  
Meanwhile, at social industry's command,  
How quick, how vast an increase ! From the germ  
Of some poor hamlet, rapidly produced  
Here a huge town, continuous and compact,  
Hiding the face of earth for leagues—and there,

Where not a habitation stood before,  
The abodes of men irregularly mass'd  
Like trees in forests,—spread through spacious tracts  
O'er which the smoke of unremitting fires  
Hangs permanent, and plentiful as wreaths  
Of vapour glittering in the morning sun.  
And, wheresoe'er the traveller turns his steps,  
He sees the barren wilderness erased,  
Or disappearing; triumph that proclaims  
How much the mild directress of the plough  
Owes to alliance with these new-born arts!  
Hence is the wide sea peopled,—and the shores  
Of Britain are resorted to by ships  
Freighted from every climate of the world  
With the world's choicest produce. Hence that sum  
Of keels that rest within her crowded ports  
Or ride at anchor in her sounds and bays;  
That animating spectacle of sails  
Which, through her inland regions, to and fro  
Pass with the respirations of the tide,  
Perpetual, multitudinous! Finally,  
Hence a dread arm of floating power, a voice  
Of thunder, daunting those who would approach  
With hostile purposes the blessèd isle,  
Truth's consecrated residence, the seat  
Impregnable of liberty and peace.

“And yet, O happy pastor of a flock  
Faithfully watch'd, and, by that loving care  
And Heaven's good providence, preserved from taint!  
With you I grieve, when on the darker side  
Of this great change I look; and there behold,  
Through strong temptation of those gainful arts,  
Such outrage done to nature as compels  
The indignant power to justify herself;  
Yea, to avenge her violated rights,  
For England's bane. When soothing darkness spreads



O'er hill and dale," the Wanderer thus express'd  
His recollections, "and the punctual stars,  
While all things else are gathering to their homes,  
Advance, and in the firmament of heaven  
Glitter—but undisturbing, undisturb'd,  
As if their silent company were charged  
With peaceful admonitions for the heart  
Of all-beholding man, earth's thoughtful lord.  
Then in full many a region once like this  
The assured domain of calm simplicity  
And pensive quiet, an unnatural light,  
Prepared for never-resting labour's eyes,  
Breaks from a many-window'd fabric huge :  
And at the appointed hour a bell is heard,—  
Of harsher import than the curfew-knoll  
That spake the Norman conqueror's stern behest,  
A local summons to unceasing toil !  
Disgorge are now the ministers of day ;  
And as they issue from the illumined pile,  
A fresh band meets them at the crowded door,  
And in the courts—and where the rumbling stream,  
That turns the multitude of dizzy wheels,  
Glares, like a troubled spirit, in its bed  
Among the rocks below. Men, maidens, youths,  
Mother and little children, boys and girls  
Enter, and each the wonted task resumes  
Within this temple, where is offer'd up  
To gain—the master idol of the realm,  
Perpetual sacrifice. Even thus of old  
Our ancestors, within the still domain  
Of vast cathedral or conventual church,  
Their vigils kept ; where tapers day and night  
On the dim altar burn'd continually,  
In token that the house was evermore  
Watching to God. Religious men were they ;  
Nor would their reason, tutor'd to aspire  
Above this transitory world, allow

That there should pass a moment of the year  
When in their land the Almighty's service ceased.

“Triumph who will in these profaner rites  
Which we, a generation self-extoll'd,  
As zealously perform — I cannot share  
His proud complacency : yet I exult,  
Casting reserve away — exult to see  
An intellectual mastery exercised  
O'er the blind elements ; a purpose given,  
A perseverance fed ; almost a soul  
Imparted to brute matter. I rejoice,  
Measuring the force of those gigantic powers  
Which by the thinking mind have been compell'd  
To serve the will of feeble-bodied man.  
For with the sense of admiration blends  
The animating hope that time may come ;  
When, strengthen'd yet not dazzled, by the might  
Of this dominion over nature gain'd,  
Men of all lands shall exercise the same  
In due proportion to their country's need ;  
Learning, though late, that all true glory rests,  
All praise, all safety, and all happiness,  
Upon the moral law. Egyptian Thebes —  
Tyre, by the margin of the sounding waves —  
Palmyra, central in the desert — fell ;  
And the arts died by which they had been raised.  
Call Archimedes from his buried tomb  
Upon the plain of vanish'd Syracuse,  
And feelingly the sage shall make report  
How insecure, how baseless in itself,  
Is that philosophy whose sway is framed  
For mere material instruments — how weak  
Those arts, and high inventions, if unpropp'd  
By virtue. He, with sighs of pensive grief,  
Amid his calm abstractions, would admit  
That not the slender privilege is theirs

To save themselves from blank forgetfulness !”

When from the Wanderer's lips these words had fall'n  
I said, “ And did in truth these vaunted arts  
Possess such privilege, how could we escape  
Regret and painful sadness, who revere,  
And would preserve, as things above all price,  
The old domestic morals of the land,  
Her simple manners, and the stable worth  
That dignified and cheer'd a low estate ?  
Oh ! where is now the character of peace,  
Sobriety, and order, and chaste love,  
And honest dealing, and untainted speech,  
And pure goodwill, and hospitable cheer,  
That made the very thought of country life  
A thought of refuge for a mind detain'd  
Reluctantly amid the bustling crowd ? —  
Where now the beauty of the Sabbath kept  
With conscientious reverence, as a day  
By the almighty Lawgiver pronounced  
Holy and blest — and where the winning grace  
Of all the lighter ornaments attach'd  
To time and season, as the year roll'd round ? ”

“ Fled ! ” was the Wanderer's passionate response ;  
“ Fled utterly ! or only to be traced  
In a few fortunate retreats like this ;  
Which I behold with trembling, when I think  
What lamentable change a year — a month —  
May bring ; that brook converting as it runs  
Into an instrument of deadly bane  
For those, who, yet untempted to forsake  
The simple occupations of their sires,  
Drink the pure water of its innocent stream  
With lip almost as pure. Domestic bliss  
(Or call it comfort, by a humbler name,)  
How art thou blighted for the poor man's heart !

Lo ! in such neighbourhood, from morn to eve,  
The habitations empty ! or perchance  
The mother left alone, — no helping hand  
To rock the cradle of her peevish babe ;  
No daughters round her, busy at the wheel,  
Or in despatch of each day's little growth  
Of household occupation ; no nice arts  
Of needlework ; no bustle at the fire,  
Where once the dinner was prepared with pride ;  
Nothing to speed the day, or cheer the mind ;  
Nothing to praise, to teach, or to command !  
The father — if perchance he still retain  
His old employments — goes to field or wood,  
No longer led or follow'd by his sons ;  
Idlers perchance they were, — but in *his* sight ;  
Breathing fresh air, and treading the green earth ;  
Till their short holiday of childhood ceased,  
Ne'er to return ! That birthright now is lost.  
Economists will tell you that the state  
Thrives by the forfeiture — unfeeling thought,  
And false as monstrous ! Can the mother thrive  
By the destruction of her innocent sons ?  
In whom a premature necessity  
Blocks out the forms of nature, preconsumes  
The reason, famishes the heart, shuts up  
The infant being in itself, and makes  
Its very spring a season of decay ?  
The lot is wretched, the condition sad,  
Whether a pining discontent survive,  
And thirst for change ; or habit hath subdued  
The soul depress'd ; dejected — even to love  
Of her dull tasks, and close captivity.  
Oh, banish far such wisdom as condemns  
A native Briton to these inward chains,  
Fix'd in his soul, so early and so deep,  
Without his own consent, or knowledge, fix'd  
He is a slave to whom release comes not,

And cannot come. The boy, where'er he turns,  
Is still a prisoner ; when the wind is up  
Among the clouds and in the ancient woods,  
Or when the sun is rising in the heavens,  
Quiet and calm. Behold him — in the school  
Of his attainments ? no ; but with the air  
Fanning his temples under heaven's blue arch.  
His raiment, whiten'd o'er with cotton flakes,  
Or locks of wool, announces whence he comes.  
Creeping his gait and cowering — his lip pale —  
His respiration quick and audible ;  
And scarcely could you fancy that a gleam  
From out those languid eyes could break, or blush  
Mantle upon his cheek. Is this the form,  
Is that the countenance, and such the port,  
Of no mean being ? One who should be clothed  
With dignity befitting his proud hope ;  
Who, in his very childhood, should appear  
Sublime — from present purity and joy !  
The limbs increase ; but liberty of mind  
Thus gone for ever, this organic frame,  
Which from Heaven's bounty we receive, instinct  
With light and gladsome motions, soon becomes  
Dull, to the joy of her own motions dead ;  
And even the touch, so exquisitely pour'd  
Through the whole body, with a languid will  
Performs its functions ; rarely competent  
To impress a vivid feeling on the mind  
Of what there is delightful in the breeze,  
The gentle visitations of the sun,  
Or lapse of liquid element — by hand,  
Or foot, or lip, in summer's warmth — perceived.  
Can hope look forward to a manhood raised  
On such foundations ? ”

“ Hope is none for him ! ”

The pale Recluse indignantly exclaim'd,  
“ And tens of thousands suffer wrong as deep.



Yet be it ask'd, in justice to our age,  
If there were not, before those arts appear'd,  
These structures rose, commingling old and young,  
And unripe sex with sex, for mutual taint ;  
Then if there were not, in our far-famed isle,  
Multitudes, who from infancy had breathed  
Air unimprison'd and had lived at large ;  
Yet walked beneath the sun, in human shape,  
As abject as degraded ? At this day,  
Who shall enumerate the crazy huts  
And tottering hovels, whence do issue forth  
A ragged offspring, with their own blanch'd hair  
Crown'd like the image of fantastic Fear :  
Or wearing, we might say, in that white growth  
An ill-adjusted turban for defence  
Or fierceness, wreath'd around their sunburnt brows,  
By savage nature's unassisted care.  
Naked, and colour'd like the soil, the feet  
On which they stand ; as if thereby they drew  
Some nourishment, as trees do by their roots,  
From earth, the common mother of us all.  
Figure and mien, complexion and attire,  
Are framed to strike dismay, but the outstretch'd hand  
And whining voice denote them supplicants  
For the least boon that pity can bestow.  
Such on the breast of darksome heaths are found ;  
And with their parents dwell upon the skirts  
Of furze-clad commons ; and are born and rear'd  
At the mine's mouth, beneath impending rocks,  
Or in the chambers of some natural cave ;  
And where their ancestors erected huts,  
For the convenience of unlawful gain,  
In forest purlieus ; and the like are bred,  
All England through, where nooks and slips of ground  
Purloin'd in times less jealous than our own,  
From the green margin of the public way,  
A residence afford them, 'mid the bloom

And gaiety of cultivated fields.  
Such (we will hope the lowest in the scale)  
Do I remember oft-times to have seen  
'Mid Buxton's dreary heights. Upon the watch,  
Till the swift vehicle approach, they stand ;  
Then, following closely with the cloud of dust,  
An uncouth feat exhibit, and are gone,  
Heels over head, like tumblers on a stage.  
Up from the ground they snatch the copper coin,  
And, on the freight of merry passengers  
Fixing a steady eye, maintain their speed ;  
And spin — and pant — and overhead again,  
Wild pursuivants ! until their breath is lost,  
Or bounty tires,—and every face that smiled  
Encouragement hath ceased to look that way.  
But, like the vagrants of the gipsy tribe,  
These, bred to little pleasure in themselves,  
Are profitless to others. Turn we then  
To Britons born and bred within the pale  
Of civil polity, and early train'd  
To earn, by wholesome labour in the field,  
The bread they eat. A sample should I give  
Of what this stock produces to enrich -  
And beautify the tender age of life,  
A sample fairly cull'd — ye would exclaim,  
'Is this the whistling ploughboy whose shrill notes.  
Impart new gladness to the morning air ?'  
Forgive me ! if I venture to suspect  
That many, sweet to hear of in soft verse,  
Are of no finer frame : his joints are stiff ;  
Beneath a cumbrous frock that to the knees  
Invests the thriving churl, his legs appear,  
Fellows to those which lustily upheld  
The wooden stools for everlasting use,  
On which our fathers sate. And mark his brow  
Under whose shaggy canopy are set  
Two eyes, not dim, but of a healthy stare ;

Wide, sluggish, blank, and ignorant, and strange ;  
Proclaiming boldly that they never drew  
A look or motion of intelligence  
From infant conning of the Christ-cross-row  
Or puzzling through a primer, line by line,  
Till perfect mast'ry crown the pains at last.  
What kindly warmth from touch of fost'ring hand,  
What penetrating power of sun or breeze,  
Shall e'er dissolve the crust wherein his soul  
Sleeps, like a caterpillar sheath'd in ice ?  
This torpor is no pitiable work  
Of modern ingenuity ; no town  
Nor crowded city may be tax'd with aught  
Or sottish vice or desperate breach of law,  
To which in after-years he may be roused.  
This boy the fields produce ; his spade and hoe,  
The carter's whip which on his shoulder rests  
In air high-towering with a boorish pomp,  
The sceptre of his sway ; his country's name,  
Her equal rights, her churches and her schools,  
What have they done for him ? And, let me ask,  
For tens of thousands uninform'd as he ?  
In brief — what liberty of mind is here ? ”

This cheerful sally pleased the mild good man,  
To whom the appeal couch'd in those closing words  
Was pointedly address'd ; and to the thoughts  
Which, in assent or opposition, rose  
Within his mind, he seem'd prepared to give  
Prompt utterance ; but, rising from our seat,  
The hospitable Vicar interposed  
With invitation earnestly renew'd.  
We follow'd, taking as he led, a path  
Along a hedge of stately hollies framed,  
Whose flexile boughs, descending with a weight  
Of leafy spray, conceal'd the stems and roots  
That gave them nourishment. How sweet, methought

When the fierce wind comes howling from the north,  
How grateful, this impenetrable screen !  
Not shaped by simple wearing of the foot  
On rural business passing to and fro  
Was the commodious walk ; a careful hand  
Had mark'd the line, and strown the surface o'er  
With pure cerulean gravel from the heights  
Fetch'd by the neighbouring brook. Across the vale  
The stately fence accompanied our steps ;  
And thus the pathway, by perennial green  
Guarded and graced, seem'd fashion'd to unite,  
As by a beautiful yet solemn chain,  
The Pastor's mansion with the house of prayer.

Like image of solemnity conjoin'd  
With feminine allurements soft and fair,  
The mansion's self display'd ; a reverend pile  
With bold projections and recesses deep ;  
Shadowy, yet gay and lightsome as it stood  
Fronting the noontide sun. We paused to admire  
The pillar'd porch, elaborately emboss'd ;  
The low wide windows with their mullions old ;  
The cornice richly fretted, of gray stone ;  
And that smooth slope from which the dwelling rose,  
By beds and banks Arcadian of gay flowers  
And flowering shrubs, protected and adorn'd.  
Profusion bright ! and every flower assuming  
A more than natural vividness of hue,  
From unaffected contrast with the gloom  
Of sober cypress, and the darker foil  
Of yew, in which survived some traces, here  
Not unbecoming, of grotesque device  
And uncouth fancy. From behind the roof  
Rose the slim ash and massy sycamore,  
Blending their diverse foliage with the green  
Of ivy, flourishing and thick, that clasp'd  
The huge round chimneys, harbour of delight

For wren and redbreast, where they sit and sing  
Their slender ditties when the trees are bare.  
Nor must I pass unnoticed (leaving else  
The picture incomplete, as it appear'd  
Before our eyes) a relic of old times  
Happily spared, a little Gothic niche  
Of nicest workmanship ; which once had held  
The sculptured image of some patron saint,  
Or of the blessèd Virgin, looking down  
On all who enter'd those religious doors.

But lo ! where from the rocky garden mount,  
Crown'd by its antique summer-house descends,  
Light as the silver fawn, a radiant girl ;  
For she hath recognised her honour'd friend  
The Wanderer, ever welcome ! A prompt kiss  
The gladsome child bestows at his request,  
And, up the flowery lawn as we advance,  
Hangs on the old man with a happy look,  
And with a pretty restless hand of love.  
We enter ; need I tell the courteous guise  
In which the lady of the place received  
Our little band, with salutation meet  
To each accorded ? Graceful was her port ;  
A lofty stature undepress'd by time,  
Whose visitation had not spared to touch  
The finer lineaments of frame and face ;  
To that complexion brought which prudence trusts in  
And wisdom loves. But when a stately ship  
Sails in smooth weather by the placid coast  
On homeward voyage, what if wind and wave,  
And hardship undergone in various climes,  
Have caused her to abate the virgin pride,  
And that full trim of inexperienced hope  
With which she left her haven — not for this,  
Should the sun strike her, and the impartial breeze  
Play on her streamers, doth she fail to assume



Brightness and touching beauty of her own,  
That charm all eyes — so bright to us appear'd  
This goodly matron, shining in the beams  
Of unexpected pleasure. Soon the board  
Was spread, and we partook a plain repast.

Here in cool shelter, while the scorching heat  
Oppress'd the fields, we sate, and entertain'd  
The mid-day hours with desultory talk  
From trivial themes to general argument  
Passing, as accident or fancy led,  
Or courtesy prescribed. While question rose  
And answer flow'd, the fetters of reserve  
Dropp'd from our minds ; and even the shy Recluse  
Resumed the manners of his happier days ;  
He in the various conversation bore  
A willing, and at times a forward part ;  
Yet with the grace of one who in the world  
Had learn'd the art of pleasing, and had now  
Occasion given him to display his skill,  
Upon the steadfast vantage-ground of truth.  
He gazed with admiration unsuppress'd  
Upon the landscape of the sun-bright vale,  
Seen, from the shady room in which we sate,  
In soften'd perspective ; and more than once  
Praised the consummate harmony serene  
Of gravity and elegance, diffused  
Around the mansion and its whole domain ;  
Not, doubtless, without help of female taste  
And female care. "A blessèd lot is yours !"   
He said, and with that exclamation breathed  
A tender sigh ; but, suddenly the door  
Opening, with eager haste two lusty boys  
Appear'd, confusion checking their delight.  
Not brothers they in feature or attire,  
But fond companions, so I guess'd, in field,  
And by the river side — from which they come,

A pair of anglers, laden with their spoil.  
One bears a willow pannier on his back,  
The boy of plainer garb, and more abash'd  
In countenance — more distant and retired.  
Twin might the other be to that fair girl  
Who bounded towards us from the garden mount.  
Triumphant entry this to him ! — for see,  
Between his hands he holds a smooth blue stone,  
On whose capacious surface is outspread  
Large store of gleaming crimson-spotted trouts ;  
Ranged side by side, in regular ascent,  
One after one, still lessening by degrees  
Up to the dwarf that tops the pinnacle.  
Upon the board he lays the sky-blue stone  
With its rich spoil : their number he proclaims ;  
Tells from what pool the noblest had been dragg'd ;  
And where the very monarch of the brook,  
After long struggle, had escaped at last —  
Stealing alternately at them and us  
(As doth his comrade too) a look of pride.  
And, verily, the silent creatures made  
A splendid sight, together thus exposed ;  
Dead — but not sullied or deform'd by death,  
That seem'd to pity what he could not spare.

But oh ! the animation in the mien  
Of those two boys ! — yea, in the very words  
With which the young narrator was inspired,  
When, as our questions led, he told at large  
Of that day's prowess ! Him might I compare,  
His look, tones, gestures, eager eloquence,  
To a bold brook which splits for better speed,  
And, at the self-same moment, works its way  
Through many channels, ever and anon  
Parted and reunited : his compeer  
To the still lake, whose stillness is to the eye  
As beautiful, as grateful to the mind.

But to what object shall the lovely girl  
 Be liken'd? She whose countenance and air  
 Unite the graceful qualities of both,  
 E'en as she shares the pride and joy of both.

My gray-hair'd friend was moved ; his vivid eye  
 Glisten'd with tenderness ; his mind I knew,  
 Was full, and had, I doubted not, return'd,  
 Upon this impulse, to the theme erewhile  
 Abruptly broken off. The ruddy boys  
 Did now withdraw to take their well-earn'd meal ;  
 And he, (to whom all tongues resign'd their rights  
 With willingness — to whom the general ear  
 Listen'd with readier patience than to strain  
 Of music, lute, or harp, — a long delight,  
 That ceased not when his voice had ceased,) as one  
 Who from truth's central point serenely views  
 The compass of his argument, began  
 Mildly, and with a clear and steady tone.

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## BOOK IX.

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### DISCOURSE OF THE WANDERER, AND AN EVENING VISIT TO THE LAKE.

Wanderer asserts that an active principle pervades the universe—  
 Its noblest seat the human soul — How lively this principle is  
 in childhood — Hence the delight in old age of looking back  
 upon childhood — The dignity, powers, and privileges of age  
 asserted — These not to be looked for generally, but under a  
 just government — Right of a human creature to be exempt  
 from being considered as a mere instrument — Vicious inclina-

tions are best kept under by giving good ones an opportunity to shew themselves — The condition of multitudes deplored from want of due respect to this truth on the part of their superiors in society — Former conversation recurred to, and the Wanderer's opinions set in a clearer light — Genuine principles of equality — Truth placed within reach of the humblest — Happy state of the two boys again adverted to — Earnest wish expressed for a system of national education established universally by Government — Glorious effects of this foretold — Wanderer breaks off — Walk to the lake — Embark — Description of scenery and amusements — Grand spectacle from the side of a hill — Address of Priest to the Supreme Being, in the course of which he contrasts with ancient barbarism the present appearance of the scene before him — The change ascribed to Christianity — Apostrophe to his flock, living and dead — Gratitude to the Almighty — Return over the lake — Parting with the Solitary — Under what circumstances.

“To every form of being is assign'd,”  
 Thus calmly spake the venerable sage,  
 “An *active* principle : howe'er removed  
 From sense and observation, it subsists  
 In all things, in all natures, in the stars  
 Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,  
 In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone  
 That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,  
 The moving waters, and the invisible air.  
 Whate'er exists hath properties that spread  
 Beyond itself, communicating good,  
 A simple blessing, or with evil mix'd ;  
 Spirit that knows no insulated spot,  
 No chasm, no solitude : from link to link  
 It circulates, the soul of all the worlds.  
 This is the freedom of the universe ;  
 Unfolded still the more, more visible,  
 The more we know, and yet is revered least,  
 And least respected, in the human mind,  
 Its most apparent home. The food of hope  
 Is meditated action ; robb'd of this,  
 Her sole support, she languishes and dies.

We perish also ; for we live by hope  
And by desire ; we see by the glad light,  
And breathe the sweet air of futurity ;  
And so we live, or else we have no life.  
To-morrow, nay, perchance, this very hour,  
(For every moment has its own to-morrow,)   
Those blooming boys, whose hearts are almost sick  
With present triumph, will be sure to find  
A field before them freshen'd with the dew  
Of other expectations ; in which course  
Their happy year spins round. The youth obeys  
A like glad impulse ; and so moves the man  
'Mid all his apprehensions, cares, and fears ;  
Or so he ought to move. Ah ! why in age  
Do we revert so fondly to the walks  
Of childhood, but that there the soul discerns  
The dear memorial footsteps unimpair'd  
Of her own native vigour — but for this  
That it is given her thence in age to hear  
Reverberations, and a choral song,  
Commingling with the incense that ascends,  
Undaunted, towards the imperishable heavens,  
From her own lonely altar ? Do not think  
That good and wise will ever be allow'd,  
Though strength decay, to breathe in such estate  
As shall divide them wholly from the stir  
Of hopeful nature. Rightly is it said  
That man descends into the vale of years ;  
Yet have I thought that we might also speak,  
And not presumptuously, I trust, of age,  
As of a final eminence, though bare  
In aspect and forbidding, yet a point  
On which 'tis not impossible to sit  
In awful sovereignty ; a place of power —  
A throne, which may be liken'd unto his,  
Who, in some placid day of summer, looks  
Down from a mountain-top, — say one of those



High peaks, that bound the vale where now we are.  
Faint and diminish'd to the gazing eye,  
Forest and field, and hill and dale, appear,  
With all the shapes upon their surface spread.  
But while the gross and visible frame of things  
Relinquishes its hold upon the sense,  
Yea, almost on the mind itself, and seems  
All unsubstantialized — how loud the voice  
Of waters, with invigorated peal  
From the full river in the vale below  
Ascending ! for on that superior height  
Who sits is disencumber'd from the press  
Of near obstructions, and is privileged  
To breathe in solitude, above the host  
Of ever-humming insects, 'mid thin air  
That suits not them. The murmur of the leaves,  
Many and idle, touches not his ear :  
This he is freed from, and from thousand notes  
Not less unceasing, not less vain than these,  
By which the finer passages of sense  
Are occupied ; and the soul, that would incline  
To listen, is prevented or deterr'd.

“ And may it not be hoped that, placed by age  
In like removal, tranquil, though severe,  
We are not so removed for utter loss,  
But for some favour, suited to our need ?  
What more than this, that we thereby should gain  
Fresh power to commune with th' invisible world,  
And hear the mighty stream of tendency  
Uttering, for elevation of our thought,  
A clear, sonorous voice, inaudible  
To the vast multitude, whose doom it is  
To run the giddy round of vain delight,  
Or fret and labour in the plain below.  
But, if to such sublime ascent the hopes  
Of man may rise, as to a welcome close

And termination of his mortal course,  
Then only can such hope inspire whose minds  
Have not been starved by absolute neglect,  
Nor bodies crush'd by unremitting toil ;  
To whom kind Nature, therefore, may afford  
Proof of the sacred love she bears for all ;  
Whose birthright reason, therefore, may insure.  
For me, consulting what I feel within  
In times when most existence with herself  
Is satisfied, I cannot but believe,  
That, far as kindly Nature hath free scope  
And reason's sway predominates, even so far,  
Country, society, and time itself,  
That saps the individual's bodily frame,  
And lays the generations low in dust,  
Do by th' almighty Ruler's grace, partake  
Of one maternal spirit, bringing forth  
And cherishing with ever-constant love  
That tires not, nor betrays. Our life is turn'd  
Out of her course, wherever man is made  
An offering or a sacrifice, a tool  
Or implement, a passive thing employ'd  
As a brute mean, without acknowledgement  
Of common right or interest in the end ;  
Used or abused, as selfishness may prompt.  
Say, what can follow for a rational soul  
Perverted thus, but weakness in all good,  
And strength in evil ? Hence an after-call  
For chastisement, and custody, and bonds,  
And oftentimes death, avenger of the past,  
And the sole guardian in whose hands we dare  
Intrust the future. Not for these sad issues  
Was man created ; but t' obey the law  
Of life, and hope, and action. And 'tis known,  
That when we stand upon our native soil,  
Unelbow'd by such objects as oppress  
Our active powers, those powers themselves become

Strong to subvert our noxious qualities :  
They sweep away infection from the heart,  
And, by the substitution of delight,  
Suppress all evil ; whence the being moves  
In beauty through the world ; and all who see  
Bless him, rejoicing in his neigh'bourhood."

"Then," said the Solitary, "by what power  
Of language shall a feeling heart express  
Her sorrow for that multitude in whom  
We look for health from seeds that have been sown  
In sickness, and for increase in a power  
That works but by extinction? On themselves  
They cannot lean, nor turn to their own hearts  
To know what they must do ; their wisdom is  
To look into the eyes of others, thence  
To be instructed what they must avoid :  
Or rather, let us say, how least observed,  
How with most quiet and most silent death,  
With the least taint and injury to the air  
The oppressor breathes, their human form divine,  
And their immortal soul, may waste away."

The sage rejoin'd : "I thank you—you have spared  
My voice the utterance of a keen regret,  
A wide compassion, which with you I share,  
When, heretofore, I placed before your sight  
A most familiar object of our days —  
A little one, subjected to the arts  
Of modern ingenuity, and made  
The senseless member of a vast machine,  
Serving as doth a spindle or a wheel,  
Think not that, pitying him, I could forget  
The rustic boy, who walks the fields untaught,  
The slave of ignorance, and oft of want,  
And miserable hunger. Much — too much,  
Of this unhappy lot, in early youth

We both have witness'd, lot which I myself  
Shared, though in mild and merciful degree :  
Yet was my mind to hindrances exposed,  
Through which I struggled, not without distress  
And sometime injury, like a sheep enthrall'd  
'Mid thorns and brambles ; or a bird that breaks  
Through a strong net, and mounts upon the wind,  
Though with her plumes impair'd. If they, whose souls  
Should open while they range the richer fields  
Of merry England, are obstructed less  
By indigence, their ignorance is not less,  
Nor less to be deplored. For who can doubt  
That tens of thousands at this day exist  
Such as the boy you painted, lineal heirs  
Of those who once were vassals of her soil,  
Following its fortunes like the beasts or trees  
Which it sustain'd. But no one takes delight  
In this oppression ; none are proud of it ;  
It bears no sounding name, nor ever bore ;  
A standing grievance, an indigenous vice  
Of every country under heaven. My thoughts  
Were turn'd to evils that are new and chosen,  
A bondage lurking under shape of good, —  
Arts, in themselves beneficent and kind,  
But all too fondly follow'd and too far ;  
To victims, which the merciful can see  
Nor think that they are victims, turn'd to wrongs,  
Which women, who have children of their own,  
Regard without compassion, yea, with praise !  
I spake of mischief which the wise diffuse  
With gladness, thinking that the more it spreads,  
The healthier, the securer, we become ;  
Delusion which a moment may destroy !  
Lastly, I mourn'd for those whom I had seen  
Corrupted and cast down, on favour'd ground,  
Where circumstances and nature had combined  
To shelter innocence, and cherish love :

Who, but for this intrusion, would have lived,  
Possess'd of health, and strength, and peace of mind ;  
Thus would have lived, or never have been born.

“ Alas ! what differs more than man from man !  
And whence that difference — whence but from himself ?  
For see the universal race endow'd  
With the same upright form — the sun is fix'd,  
And the infinite magnificence of heaven,  
Within the reach of every human eye ;  
The sleepless ocean murmurs for all ears ;  
The vernal field infuses fresh delight  
Into all hearts, Throughout the world of sense,  
Even as an object is sublime or fair,  
That object is laid open to the view  
Without reserve or veil ; and as a power  
Is salutary, or an influence sweet,  
Are each and all enabled to perceive  
That power, that influence, by impartial law.  
Gifts nobler are vouchsafed to all ;  
Reason, and, with that reason, smiles and tears ;  
Imagination, freedom in the will ;  
Conscience to guide and check ; and death to be  
Foretasted, immortality presumed.  
Strange, then, not less than monstrous, might be deem'd  
The failure, if the Almighty, to this point  
Liberal and undistinguishing, should hide  
The excellence of moral qualities  
From common understanding ; leaving truth  
And virtue, difficult, abstruse, and dark,  
Hard to be won, and only by a few !  
Strange, should He deal herein with nice respects,  
And frustrate all the rest ! Believe it not :  
The primal duties shine aloft — like stars ;  
The charities that soothe and heal, and bless,  
Are scatter'd at the feet of man — like flowers.  
The generous inclination, the just rule,



Kind wishes, and good actions, and pure thoughts —  
No mystery is here ; no special boon  
For high, and not for low ; for proudly graced —  
And not for meek of heart. The smoke ascends  
To heaven as lightly from the cottage hearth  
As from the haughty palace. He, whose soul  
Ponders this true equality, may walk  
The fields of earth with gratitude and hope ;  
Yet, in that meditation, will he find  
Motives to sadder grief, as we have found ;  
Lamenting ancient virtues overthrown,  
And for the injustice grieving that hath made  
So wide a difference betwixt man and man.

“ Then let us rather fix our gladden'd thoughts  
Upon the brighter scene. How blest that pair  
Of blooming boys (whom we beheld even now)  
Blest in their several and their common lot !  
A few short hours of each returning day,  
The thriving prisoners of their village school ;  
And then let loose, to seek their pleasant homes  
Or range the grassy lawn in vacancy ;  
To breathe and to be happy, run and shout,  
Idle, — but no delay, no harm, no loss ;  
For every genial power of heaven and earth,  
Throughout all the seasons of the changeful year,  
Obsequiously doth take upon herself  
To labour for them — bringing each in turn  
The tribute of enjoyment, knowledge, health,  
Beauty, or strength ! Such privilege is theirs,  
Granted alike in the outset of their course  
To both ; and, if that partnership must cease,  
I grieve not,” — to the Pastor here he turn'd,  
“ Much as I glory in that child of yours,  
Repine not for his cottage comrades, whom  
Belike no higher destiny awaits  
Than the old hereditary wish fulfill'd

The wish for liberty to live — content  
With what heaven grants — and die, in peace of mind,  
Within the bosom of his native vale.  
At least, whatever fate the noon of life  
Reserves for either, this is sure, that both  
Have been permitted to enjoy the dawn ;  
Whether regarded as a jocund time,  
That in itself may terminate, or lead  
In course of nature to a sober eve.  
Both have been fairly dealt with ; looking back  
They will allow that justice has in them  
Been shewn, alike to body and to mind.”

He paused, as if revolving in his soul  
Some weighty matter ; then, with fervent voice  
And an impassion'd majesty, exclaim'd —

“ Oh for the coming of that glorious time  
When, prizing knowledge at her noblest wealth  
And best protection, this imperial realm,  
While she exacts allegiance, shall admit  
An obligation, on her part, to *teach*  
Them who are born to serve her and obey ;  
Binding herself by statute to secure  
For all the children whom her soil maintains  
The rudiments of letters, and to inform  
The mind with moral and religious truth,  
Both understood and practised, — so that none,  
However destitute, be left to droop  
By timely culture unsustain'd ; or run  
Into a wild disorder ; or be forced  
To drudge through weary life without the aid  
Of intellectual implements and tools ;  
A savage horde among the civilised,  
A servile band among the lordly free !  
This right, as sacred almost as the right  
To exist and be supplied with sustenance

And means of life, the lisping babe proclaims  
To be inherent in him, by Heaven's will,  
For the protection of his innocence ;  
And the rude boy — who, having overpass'd  
The sinless age, by conscience is enroll'd,  
Yet mutinously knits his angry brow,  
And lifts his wilful hand on mischief bent,  
Or turns the sacred faculty of speech  
To impious use — by process indirect  
Declares his due, while he makes known his need.  
This sacred right is fruitlessly announced,  
This universal plea in vain address'd,  
To eyes and ears of parents who themselves  
Did, in the time of their necessity,  
Urge it in vain ; and, therefore, like a prayer  
That from the humblest floor ascends to Heaven,  
It mounts to reach the State's parental ear ;  
Who, if indeed she own a mother's heart,  
And be not most unfeelingly devoid  
Of gratitude to Providence, will grant  
The unquestionable good — which, England, safe  
From interference of external force,  
May grant at leisure ; without risk incurr'd  
That what in wisdom for herself she doth,  
Others shall e'er be able to undo.

“Look ! and behold, from Calpe's sunburnt cliffs  
To the flat margin of the Baltic Sea,  
Long-reverenced titles cast away as weeds ;  
Laws overturn'd ; and territory split,  
Like fields of ice rent by the polar wind,  
And forced to join in less obnoxious shapes  
Which, ere they gain consistence, by a gust  
Of the same breath are shatter'd and destroy'd.  
Meantime the sovereignty of these fair isles  
Remains entire and indivisible :  
And, if that ignorance were removed which acts

Within the compass of their several shores  
To breed commotion and disquietude,  
Each might preserve the beautiful repose  
Of heavenly bodies shining in their spheres.  
The discipline of slavery is unknown  
Amongst us, — hence the more do we require  
The discipline of virtue ; order else  
Cannot subsist, nor confidence, nor peace.  
Thus, duties rising out of good possess'd,  
And prudent caution needful to avert  
Impending evil, do alike require  
That permanent provision should be made  
For the whole people to be taught and train'd.  
So shall licentiousness and black resolve  
Be rooted out, and virtuous habits take  
Their place ; and genuine piety descend,  
Like an inheritance, from age to age.

“ With such foundations lain, avaunt the fear  
Of numbers crowded on their native soil,  
To the prevention of all healthful growth,  
Through mutual injury ! Rather in the law  
Of increase and the mandate from above  
Rejoice ! — and ye have special cause for joy.  
For, as the element of air affords  
An easy passage to the industrious bees  
Fraught with their burthens ; and a way as smooth  
For those ordain'd to take their sounding flight  
From the throng'd hive, and settle where they list  
In fresh abodes — their labours to renew ;  
So the wide waters, open to the power,  
The will, the instincts, and appointed needs  
Of Britian, do invite her to cast off  
Her swarms, and in succession send them forth,  
Bound to establish new communities  
On every shore whose aspect favours hope  
Or bold adventure : promising to skill

And perseverance their deserved reward.  
Yes," he continued, kindling as he spake,  
"Change wide and deep, and silently perform'd,  
This land shall witness; and, as days roll on,  
Earth's universal frame shall feel th' effect  
Even till the smallest habitable rock,  
Beaten by lonely billows, hear the songs  
Of humanized society; and bloom  
With civil arts, and send their fragrance forth,  
A grateful tribute to all-ruling Heaven.  
From culture, universally bestow'd  
On Britain's noble race in freedom born,  
Expect these mighty issues: from the pains  
And quiet care and unambitious schools,  
Instructing simple childhood's ready ear,  
Thence look for these magnificent results!  
Vast the circumference of hope — and ye  
Are at its centre, British lawgivers:  
Ah! sleep not there in shame! Shall Wisdom's voice,  
From out the bosom of these troubled times  
Repeat the dictates of her calmer mind,  
And shall the venerable halls ye fill  
Refuse to echo the sublime decree?  
Trust not to partial care a general good;  
Transfer not to futurity a work  
Of urgent need. Your country must complete  
Her glorious destiny. Begin even now,  
Now, when oppression, like the Egyptian plague  
Of darkness, stretch'd o'er guilty Europe, makes  
The brightness more conspicuous, that invests  
The happy island where ye think and act;  
Now, when destruction is a prime pursuit,  
Shew to the wretched nations for what end  
The powers of civil polity were given."

Abruptly here, but with a graceful air,  
The sage broke off. No sooner had he ceased



Than, looking forth, the gentle lady said,  
"Behold the shades of afternoon hath fallen  
Upon this flow'ry slope ; and see — beyond —  
The lake, though bright, is of a placid blue,  
As if preparing for the peace of evening.  
How temptingly the landscape shines ! The air  
Breathes invitation ; easy is the walk  
To the lake's margin, where a boat lies moor'd  
Beneath a shelt'ring tree." Upon this hint  
We rose together ; all well pleased ; but most  
The beauteous girl, whose cheek was flush'd with joy.  
Light as a sunbeam glides along the hills  
She vanish'd — eager to impart the scheme  
To her loved brother and his shy compeer.  
Now was there bustle in the Vicar's house  
And earnest preparation. Forth we went,  
And down the valley on the streamlet's bank  
Pursued our way, a broken company,  
Mute or conversing, single or in pairs.  
Thus, having reach'd a bridge, that overarch'd  
The hasty rivulet, where it lay becalm'd  
In a deep pool, by happy chance we saw  
A twofold image ; on a grassy bank  
A snow-white ram, and in the crystal flood  
Another and the same ! Most beautiful,  
On the green turf, with his imperial front  
Shaggy and bold, and wreath'd horns superb,  
The breathing creature stood ; as beautiful,  
Beneath him, shew'd his shadowy counterpart.  
Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,  
And each seem'd centre of his own fair world :  
Antipodes unconscious of each other,  
Yet, in partition, with their several spheres,  
Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight !

"Ah ! what a pity were it to disperse,  
Or to disturb, so fair a spectacle,

And yet a breath can do it !”

These few words

The lady whisper'd, while we stood and gazed  
Gather'd together, all in still delight,  
Not without awe. Thence passing on, she said  
In like low voice to my particular ear,  
“ I love to hear that eloquent old man  
Pour forth his meditations, and descant  
On human life from infancy to age.  
How pure his spirit — in what vivid hues  
His mind gives back the various forms of things,  
Caught in their fairest, happiest attitude !  
While he is speaking, I have power to see  
Even as he sees ; but when his voice hath ceased,  
Then, with a sigh, I sometimes feel, as now,  
That combinations so serene and bright,  
Like those reflected in yon quiet pool,  
Cannot be lasting in a world like ours,  
To great and small disturbances exposed.”  
More had she said — but sportive shouts were heard ;  
Sent from the jocund hearts of those two boys.  
Who, bearing each a basket on his arm,  
Down the green field came tripping after us.  
When we had cautiously embark'd, the pair  
Now for a prouder service were address'd :  
But an inexorable law forbade,  
And each resign'd the oar which he had seized.  
Whereat, with willing hand I undertook  
The needful labour—grateful task ! — to me  
Pregnant with recollections of the time  
When, on thy bosom, spacious Windermere !  
A youth, I practised this delightful art ;  
Toss'd on the waves alone, or, 'mid a crew  
Of joyous comrades. Now the reedy marge  
Clear'd, with a strenuous arm I dipp'd the oar  
Free from obstruction ; and the boat advanced  
Through crystal water, smoothly as a hawk,

That, disentangled from the shady boughs  
Of some thick wood, her place of covert, cleaves  
With correspondent wings th' abyss of air.  
"Observe," the Vicar said, "yon rocky isle  
With birch-trees fringed ; my hand shall guide the helm,  
While thitherward we bend our course ; or while  
We seek that other, on the western shore, —  
Where the bare columns of those lofty firs,  
Supporting gracefully a massy dome  
Of sombre foliage, seem to imitate  
A Grecian temple rising from the deep."

"Turn where we may," said I, "we cannot err  
In this delicious region." Cultured slopes,  
Wild tracts of forest ground, and scatter'd groves,  
And mountains bare, or clothed with ancient woods,  
Surrounded us ; and, as we held our way  
Along the level of the grassy flood  
They ceased not to surround us ; change of place,  
From kindred features diversely combined,  
Producing change of beauty ever new.  
Ah ! that such beauty, varying in the light  
Of living nature, cannot be portray'd  
By words, nor by the pencil's silent skill ;  
But is the property of him alone  
Who hath beheld it, noted it with care,  
And in his mind recorded it with love !  
Suffice it, therefore, if the rural muse  
Vouchsafe sweet influence, while her poet speaks  
Of trivial occupations well devised,  
And unsought pleasures springing up by chance ;  
As if some friendly genius had ordain'd  
That, as the day thus far had been enrich'd  
By acquisition of sincere delight,  
The same should be continued to its close.

One spirit animating old and young,

A gipsy fire we kindled on the shore  
Of the fair isle with birch-trees fringed — and there,  
Merrily seated in a ring, partook  
The beverage drawn from China's fragrant herb.  
Launch'd from our hands, the smooth stone skimm'd the  
lake ;

With shouts we roused the echoes ; stiller sounds  
The lovely girl supplied — a simple song,  
Whose low tones reached not to the distant rocks  
To be repeated there, but gently sank  
Into our hearts, and charm'd the peaceful flood.  
Rapaciously we gather'd flow'ry spoils  
From land and water ! lilies of each hue —  
Golden and white, that float upon the waves,  
And court the wind ; and leaves of that shy plant  
(Her flowers were shed) the lily of the vale,  
That loves the ground, and from the sun withholds  
Her pensive beauty ; from the breeze her sweets.

Such product and such pastime did the place  
And season yield ; but, as we re-embark'd,  
Leaving, in quest of other scenes, the shore  
Of that wild spot, the Solitary said,  
In a low voice, yet careless who might hear,  
“ The fire, that burn'd so brightly to our wish,  
Where is it now ? Deserted on the beach,  
It seems extinct ; nor shall the fanning breeze  
Revive its ashes. What care we for this,  
Whose ends are gain'd. Behold an emblem here  
Of one day's pleasure, and all mortal joys !  
And, in this unpremeditated slight  
Of that which is no longer needed, see  
The common course of human gratitude ! ”

This plaintive note disturb'd not the repose  
Of the still evening. Right across the lake  
Our pinnace moves : then, coasting creek and bay,

Glades we beheld, and into thicket's peep'd,  
Where couched the spotted deer; or raised our eyes  
To shaggy steeps on which the careless goat  
Browsed by the side of dashing waterfalls.  
Thus did the bark, meandering with the shore,  
Pursue her voyage, till a point was gain'd  
Where a projecting line of rock, that framed  
A natural pier, invited us to land.

Alert to follow as the Pastor led,  
We clomb a green hill's side, and thence obtain'd,  
Slowly, a less and less obstructed sight  
Of the flat meadows and indented coast  
Of the whole lake, in compass seen : far off  
And yet conspicuous, stood the old church-tower  
In majesty presiding o'er the vale  
And all her dwellings ; seemingly preserved  
From the intrusion of a restless world  
By rocks impassable and mountains huge.

Soft heath this elevated spot supplied,  
With resting-place of mossy stone ; and there  
We sate reclined, admiring quietly  
The frame and general aspect of the scene ;  
And each not seldom eager to make known  
His own discoveries ; or to favourite points  
Directing notice, merely from a wish  
T' impart a joy, imperfect while unshared.  
That rapturous moment ne'er shall I forget  
When these particular interests were effaced  
From every mind ! Already had the sun,  
Sinking with less than ordinary state,  
Attain'd his western bounds ; but rays of light—  
Now suddenly diverging from the orb,  
Retired behind the mountain tops or veil'd  
By the dense air—shot upwards to the crown  
Of the blue firmament—aloft—and wide ;



And multitudes of little floating clouds,  
Pierced through their thin ethereal mould, ere we,  
Who saw, of change were conscious, had become  
Vivid as fire — clouds separately poised,  
Innumerable multitude of forms  
Scatter'd through half the circle of the sky ;  
And giving back, and shedding each on each,  
With prodigal communion, the bright hues  
Which from the unapparent fount of glory  
They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.  
That which the heavens display'd, the liquid deep  
Repeated ; but with unity sublime !

While from the grassy mountain's open side  
We gazed, in silence hush'd, with eyes intent  
On the refulgent spectacle, diffused  
Through earth, sky, water, and all visible space,  
The Priest, in holy transport, thus exclaim'd :—

“ Eternal Spirit ! universal God !  
Power inaccessible to human thought  
Save by degrees and steps which Thou hast deign'd  
To furnish ; for this image of Thyself,  
To the infirmity of mortal sense -  
Vouchsafed ; this local, transitory type  
Of Thy paternal splendours, and the pomp  
Of those who fill Thy courts in highest heaven,  
The radiant cherubim ;— accept the thanks  
Which we, Thy humble creatures, here convened,  
Presume to offer ; we, who from the breast  
Of the frail earth, permitted to behold  
The faint reflections only of Thy face,  
Are yet exalted, and in soul adore !  
Such as they are who in Thy presence stand  
Unsullied, incorruptible, and drink  
Imperishable majesty stream'd forth  
From Thy empyreal throne, the elect of earth

Shall be — divested at the appointed hour  
Of all dishonour — cleansed from mortal stain.  
Accomplish, then, their number ; and conclude  
Time's weary course ! Or if, by Thy decree,  
The consummation that will come by stealth  
Be yet far distant, let Thy Word prevail,  
Oh ! let Thy Word prevail, to take away  
The sting of human nature. Spread the law,  
As it is written in Thy holy book,  
Throughout all lands ; let every nation hear  
The high behest, and every heart obey :  
Both for the love of purity, and hope  
Which it affords, to such as do Thy will  
And persevere in good, that they shall rise,  
To have a nearer view of Thee in heaven.  
Father of good ! this prayer in bounty grant,  
In mercy grant it to Thy wretched sons.  
Then, nor till then, shall persecutions cease,  
And cruel wars expire. The way is mark'd,  
The guide appointed, and the ransom paid.  
Alas ! the nations, who of yore received  
These tidings, and in Christian temples meet  
The sacred truth to acknowledge, linger still ;  
Preferring bonds and darkness to a state  
Of holy freedom, by redeeming love  
Profer'd to all, while yet on earth detain'd.  
So fare the many ; and the thoughtful few,  
Who, in the anguish of their souls, bewail  
This dire perverseness, cannot choose but ask,  
Shall it endure ? Shall enmity and strife,  
Falsehood and guile, be left to sow their seed  
And the kind never perish ? Is the hope  
Fallacious, or shall righteousness obtain  
A peaceable dominion, wide as earth,  
And ne'er to fail ? Shall that blest day arrive  
When they, whose choice or lot it is to dwell  
In crowded cities, without fear shall live

Studious of mutual benefit — and he,  
Whom morning wakes, among sweet dews and flowers  
Of every clime, to till the lonely field,  
Be happy in himself? The law of faith,  
Working through love, such conquest shall it gain?  
Such triumph over sin and guilt achieve?  
Almighty Lord, thy further grace impart!  
And with that help the wonder shall be seen  
Fulfill'd, the hope accomplish'd; and Thy praise  
Be sung with transport and unceasing joy.

“ Once, while the name Jehovah was a sound  
Within the circuit of this sea-girt isle  
Unheard, the savage nations bow'd their heads  
To gods delighting in remorseless deeds;  
Gods which themselves had fashion'd, to promote  
Ill purposes, and flatter foul desires.  
Then, in the bosom of yon mountain cove,  
To those inventions of corrupted man  
Mysterious rites were solemnised; and there,  
Amid impending rocks and gloomy woods,  
Of those dread idols, some, perchance, received  
Such dismal service, that the loudest voice  
Of the swoln cataracts (which now are heard  
Soft murmuring) was too weak to overcome,  
Though aided by wild winds, the groans and shrieks  
Of human victims, offered up to appease  
Or to propitiate. And, if living eyes  
Had visionary faculties to see  
The thing that hath been as the thing that is,  
Aghast we might behold this spacious mere  
Bedimm'd with smoke, in wreaths voluminous,  
Flung from the body of devouring fires,  
To Taranis erected on the heights  
By priestly hands, for sacrifice perform'd  
Exultingly, in view of open day  
And full assemblage of a barbarous host;

Or to Andates, female power ! who gave  
(For so they fancied) glorious victory.  
A few rude monuments of mountain stone  
Survive ; all else is swept away. — How bright  
The appearances of things ! From such how changed  
The existing worship ; and, with those compared,  
The worshippers how innocent and blest !  
So wide the difference, a willing mind  
At this affecting hour might almost think  
That Paradise, the lost abode of man,  
Was raised again : and to a happy few,  
In its original beauty, here restored.

“ Whence but from Thee, the true and only God,  
And from the faith derived through Him who bled  
Upon the cross, this marvellous advance  
Of good from evil ; as if one extreme  
Were left — the other gain’d. O ye, who come  
To kneel devoutly in yon reverend pile,  
Call’d to such office by the peaceful sound  
Of Sabbath bells ; and ye who sleep in earth,  
All cares forgotten, round its hallow’d walls !  
For you, in presence of this little band  
Gather’d together on the green hill-side,  
Your Pastor is embolden’d to prefer  
Vocal thanksgivings to the eternal King ;  
Whose love, whose counsel, whose commands have made  
Your very poorest rich in peace of thought  
And in good works ; and him, who is endow’d  
With scantiest knowledge, master of all truth  
Which the salvation of his soul requires.  
Conscious of that abundant favour shower’d  
On you, the children of my humble care ;  
On your abodes, ’mid this beloved land,  
Our birthplace, home, and country, while on earth  
We sojourn, — loudly do I utter thanks  
With earnest joy, that will not be suppress’d.

These barren rocks, your stern inheritance ;  
These fertile fields, that recompense your pains ;  
The shadowy vale, the sunny mountain-top ;  
Woods waving in the wind their lofty heads,  
Or hush'd ; the roaring waters, or the still ; —  
They see the offering of my lifted hands —  
They hear my lips present their sacrifice —  
They know if I be silent, morn or even :  
For though in whispers speaking, the full heart  
Will find a vent ; and thought is praise to Him,  
Audible praise to Thee, omniscient Mind,  
From whom all gifts descend, all blessings flow ! ”

This vesper service closed, without delay,  
From that exalted station, to the plain  
Descending, we pursued our homeward course  
In mute composure, o'er the shadowy lake,  
Beneath a faded sky. No trace remain'd  
Of those celestial splendours ; gray the vault,  
Pure, cloudless ether ; and the star of eve  
Was wanting ; but inferior lights appear'd  
Faintly, too faint almost for sight ; and some  
Above the darken'd hills stood boldly forth  
In twinkling lustre, ere the boat attain'd  
Her mooring-place ; where, to the sheltering tree,  
Our youthful voyagers bound fast her prow,  
With prompt yet careful hands. This done, we paced  
The dewy fields ; but ere the Vicar's door  
Was reach'd, the Solitary check'd his steps ;  
Then, intermingling thanks, on each bestow'd  
A farewell salutation, and the like  
Receiving, took the slender path that leads  
To the one cottage in the lonely dell,  
His chosen residence. But, ere he turn'd  
Aside, a welcome promise had been given  
That he would share the pleasures and pursuits  
Of yet another summer's day, consumed



In wandering with us through the valleys fair  
 And o'er the mountain wastes. "Another sun"  
 Said he, "shall shine upon us ere we part,  
 Another sun, and peradventure more ;  
 If time, with free consent, be yours to give,  
 And season favours." \*

To enfeebled power,  
 From this communion with uninjured minds,  
 What renovation had been brought ; and what  
 Degree of healing to a wounded spirit,  
 Dejected, and habitually disposed  
 To seek, in degradation of the kind,  
 Excuse and solace for her own defects ;  
 How far those erring notions were reform'd ;  
 And whether aught of tendency as good  
 And pure, from further intercourse ensued ;  
 This (if delightful hopes, as heretofore,  
 Inspire the serious song, and gentle hearts  
 Cherish, and lofty minds approve the past)  
 My future labours may not leave untold.

\* "When," says Wordsworth in his illustrative notices of *The Excursion*, "I reported this promise of the 'Solitary,' and long after, it was my wish, and I might say intention, that we should resume our wanderings and pass the borders into his native country, where, as I hoped, he might witness, in the society of the 'Wanderer,' some religious ceremony — a sacrament say, in the open fields, or a preaching among the mountains, which, by recalling to his mind the days of his early childhood, when he had been present on such occasions in company with his parents and nearest kindred, might have dissolved his heart into tenderness, and so done more towards restoring the Christian faith in which he had been educated, and, with that, contentedness and even cheerfulness of mind, and all that the 'Wanderer' and 'Pastor' by their several effusions and addresses had been unable to effect. An issue like this was in my intentions, but alas !

'Mid the wreck of is and was,  
 Things incomplete and purposes betrayed  
 Make sadder transits o'er thought's optic glass  
 Than noblest objects utterly decayed.' "











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